



T.O.D. Johnston

A Layman's  
Commentary on the  
Acts of the Apostles  
*Scriptures included*

T.O.D. Johnston's Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles

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T.O.D. Johnston's Commentary on Acts

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A Layman's Commentary  
On The Acts of the Apostles:  
Composed In 38 Lessons

1st Edition - 2011

Written by T.O.D. Johnston  
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Dedicated for knowledge, understanding, and inspiration as we seek to follow Our  
Lord & Savior Jesus Christ.

T.O.D. Johnston's Commentary on Acts  
Preface

After reading many scholarly commentaries on different books of Scripture, it became my mental habit to sift through the minute discussions of individual words and/or phrases, and the quoting of various scholars of the past of many differing opinions, and center on the most logical and inspirational truths that remained. Thus I relied on the studied scholarship of those who had learned the original languages and had read all the previous scholars that had written to get the best possible understanding of Scripture that I, as a non-scholar, could. It seemed that most church members would not attempt to read scholarly works - but would benefit from their knowledge if presented in a plain and straightforward manner, the truths they had perceived. The following commentary is my attempt to do this. May God bless my efforts to the extent that they increase the understanding and faith of the reader.

T.O.D. Johnston  
2005

## Lesson I

### Introduction

The title of The Acts of the Apostles was given to this treatise by the Christian Church from the first century onward. It records what the Apostles "did" in establishing Christ's Church. It centers around the acts of Peter and Paul. Peter was to proclaim the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles. Paul was to carry the Gospel to the pagan world of the Roman Empire. Some mention of some of the other Apostles was also included. Only the death of James, of the original 11, is recorded.

The book of Acts is the companion record to the Gospel of Luke. Acts has been accepted from the beginning as having been penned by the same author. This treatise claims so, and is addressed to the same individual as the former one (see Luke 1:3). It takes up the narrative at the same place left off in the former record (Acts 1:1,2).

The time written designates the time as around 62 A.D., and no later 63 A.D. This is based on internal evidence of events mentioned, specifically the second year of Paul's residing in Rome. It has been assumed that Luke wrote the book of Acts in Rome. This is based on the mention of Luke's arrival with Paul in Rome (Acts 28:16), and no mention of his leaving that city. The authenticity of the book of Acts has never been questioned. It is selective and limited in its inclusions.

Certain things of importance are highlighted:

1. The historical record of the Promise and coming and working of the Holy Spirit. This was the promise of power from on high to empower the Apostles that they were to tarry in Jerusalem for (Luke 24:49). The greatest triumphs of His finished work would take place after His ascension. Thus this record uniquely shows the roles of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the Great Work of Redemption. This book was the unique record of the Holy Spirit's work. It continues from the Gospel accounts of Christ's work for man's salvation. The Old Testament shows the Father's preparation.

2. It is the first inspired account of the great working of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of a multitude of people. Also, it shows the power, given to the speakers of the gospels. It also shows the proper response to the Gospel. It is a measure and guide to all subsequent "revivals" and movements: what is proper and genuine.

3. This record suggests that the power and operations of the Holy Spirit should always be expected to occur within the Christian Church. It should also be expected in the spread of the Gospel throughout the world, until Christ comes for His Church.

4. The Church was founded by the bold proclamation of the truth of the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This book contains several of the best examples of this preaching. It also contains the record of the organization of the beginning church. It was the working out of the effect of the Gospel on the mind and heart of each believer individually, and then collectively. Its purpose was to worship God in spirit and truth, and love one another, sharing

## Lesson I Continued

together and encouraging one another in the faith. There were no outward trappings, no magnificent edifices, no dazzling shows, rites and ceremonies, or fancy clothes, no popes and priests, no show of wealth, no hierarchy of persons, no books of dogma or lists of rules. There was only the Word of God and the Love of Christ.

5. We also observe the nature of the carrying out of the Great Commission. People put this mission first, giving up whatever stood in the way, whether wealth, position, vocation, home, family, even to giving up their lives. Stephen and Paul come to mind immediately. This is the true spirit of the Gospel of Christ.

6. This book also includes many incidental references to persons, places, and events that are recorded in other places in the New Testament - especially the Epistles. Each proves how genuine the authors and their records were.

7. This book is irrefutable proof of the reality of the truth of Christianity. Within 30 years of Christ's death and resurrection, His Gospel had been spread to all parts of the Roman Empire, and well beyond. Its progress was public, profound, and lasting. It penetrated every class, religion, vocation, race, gender, and age. Major cities had churches established, including Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, and Rome. This was all in spite of great and deadly opposition by Jews and pagans alike. This faith was to unseat the established pagan religions, temples, and bloody rites.

Christianity was not spread by force, influence, power, or coercion. There was no wealth, army, hierarchy, indoctrinators, or enforcers. They had experience with Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth of the Gospel message of love, forgiveness, and salvation - all by the grace and mercy of the only true God.

Whoever does not acknowledge this must explain how this change took place, and then how it continued to this day. If God did not bring this to pass, could men have done it by their own power, by magic, by charisma, or any other means. The preaching of the Gospel still brings people to faith in Christ, that changes them from selfish, self seeking, sinful ways of life to a path of forgiveness, love, faith, and helping and sharing with others. Jesus Christ is and will always be the power of God unto salvation. This remains true in spite of all the things people have added to it: all the pomp and circumstance, rules and regulations, power and wealth, fancy robes and edifices that show man's own vanity.

Intro finis!

## Lesson I Continued

The Acts of the Apostles 1:1-8.

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theoph'ilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,  
 2 until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen:  
 3 to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:  
 4 and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.  
 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.  
 6 ¶ When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?  
 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.  
 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

1:1.

The former treatise: this indicates what we know as the Gospel of Luke - treatise meaning narrative. This book is written to the same "Theophilus" as the previous one, for the same purpose: to record the genuine and true historical account of the ascension of Christ, the descent, of the Holy Spirit, and the organization of the church. It would also included examples of preaching the true Gospel of Christ.

Luke accompanied Paul on many of his travels and therefore was eyewitness to most of the activities here recorded. "Of all" means the most important parts of the activities of Christ, both what He did and said. "Began to do!" is a Hebrew expression that means the same as the simple statement of what He did.

Verses 2-5.

Luke continues to summarize the ending of his Gospel account that included the forty days after His resurrection until the day He was taken up into heaven. These included the commandments to stay in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, which Jesus had promised. Even though John baptized with water, they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

He had shown Himself to be alive after His passion "by many infallible proofs". He was seen of His disciples and He spoke to them about the kingdom of God for 40 days. All these appearances, His eating with them, and His meeting and speaking with them on various occasions were indisputable proof of His resurrection. There was absolutely no chance that they could have been fooled for such a long period of time, and that so many could be included in such a ruse. There are 13 recorded appearances of Christ to His disciples after



### Lesson I Continued

His resurrection. That He continued the teaching as He had before also shows that it was the same Person who addressed them: the same purposes, and focusing on the future about the spread, organization, and edification of His church.

#### Verse 4.

Having assembled them together, Jesus gives them direct instruction as to what they must do after He departs from them. He had previously told them about the promise of the Holy Spirit (another comforter). (John 14:6,26; 15:26; 16:7-13.)

#### Verse 5.

From Matthew 3:11, and John 1:33, John was characterized by baptizing with water, but the Messiah was to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This was to take place "not many days hence", on the day of Pentecost.

#### Verse 6.

At the Mount of Olives, the disciples again questioned Jesus about the common understanding of the Jews concerning the Messiah as conqueror over the foreign oppressor. His death had, at least temporarily, destroyed those hopes. His resurrection had brought these hopes back. This was in spite of Jesus continually teaching the true nature of His mission as the Suffering Servant.

Now, He had shown power even over death, as well as all adversaries. Would He now restore the kingdom? They took it for granted that He could, and that this was part of Biblical prophecy. Jesus answers their specific question - "wilt thou at this time...?" They had in mind a restoration to the former glory, as in the reign of David and Solomon, with the Messiah ruling over all nations.

#### Verse 7.

Jesus does not discount their question about what He would do - only and directly about the time. The rule was that it is not given for man to know the time of the major events in God's plans. In Matthew 24:3, Jesus says that they were not to know the day or hour, the times or seasons. They were held by the power and authority from the Father only. He will bring them to pass at the time He keeps in His own knowledge. Not even the Son knows the day or the hour. As such, no one can speculate or set dates as to their fulfillment. This does not, unfortunately, stop people from doing so, from the 1st century to the 21st. They are to come as a thief in the night, unexpectedly. This prevents man from focusing on some future event, rather than the necessities of the present. This remains as true as the knowledge of the time of our own death. The possibility of its imminence makes every day of the greatest importance to be about the Lord's work.

Lesson I Continued

Verse 8.

This was what the disciples would be blessed with: "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you." This was the promise of the Guide and Comfortor. The power was that of the indwelling Spirit to speak through them with great effect, and to endure great trials and tribulations. They were to be focused on their role, not on temporal things (such as the kingdom of Israel). Their roles were to be witnesses unto Christ, both in Jerusalem, all Judea, in Samaria, to the uttermost part of the earth.

They had been with Jesus over three years. They had seen His way of living, healing, giving, teaching, reaching out to so many others. They had heard the message of the kingdom of God. They had seen Him after the resurrection, and were now about to see Him ascend to heaven. They were well-qualified as witnesses. They knew and experienced the truth of Christ, and so consistently spread their impartial and genuine experience - without doubt or misgivings. No one could convince them they had been deceived or fooled. They had no other motive than sharing the truth they knew.

The beginning was in Jerusalem, at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came with power. Most of the disciples stayed in Jerusalem until the persecution that began with the death of Stephen (Acts 8:1,4). The apostles stayed until James was put to death by Herod.

This was in about 8 years. During this time, Paul had been called as apostle to the Gentiles. Peter had shared the Gospel with Cornelius. Philip had preached to the Ethiopian Eunuch.

Judea was the southern part of the Holy Land and was reached from the capital at Jerusalem. The middle part of Israel was Samaria. This was only the beginning. As previously directed, they were to go to all nations with the Gospel. This directive continues to this day and remains part of the responsibility of the church.

## Lesson II

### The Acts of the Apostles 1:9-26.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.  
 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;  
 11 which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.  
 12 ¶ Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Ol'ivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.  
 13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Al'pheus, and Simon Zelo'tes, and Judas the brother of James.  
 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.  
 15 ¶ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about a hundred and twenty,)  
 16 Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.  
 17 For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.  
 18 Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.  
 19 And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called, in their proper tongue, Acel'dama, that is to say, The field of blood.  
 20 For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and, His bishopric let another take.  
 21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,  
 22 beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.  
 23 And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthi'as.  
 24 And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen,  
 25 that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.  
 26 And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthi'as; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

#### Verse 9.

Though they did not see Christ rise from the dead, it is affirmed here that they were looking at the risen Christ. Also here they were watching Him at this time when, in normal day, they were talking to Him, and He was taken up out of their sight. This was

## Lesson II Continued

unmistakably a work of God. This was affirmation of the truth of Christ's finished work.

It also affirmed where Jesus was going. This redirected their thoughts from earthly things to the truth of God's plan for Jesus and for them. This made certain that the nature of the kingdom Jesus came to inaugurate. It was not an earthly kingdom. Therefore, Jesus finished the work the Father had given Him to do on earth, and now He was received back to the glory He had with the Father before the world was.

It was also proper and necessary for the new ministry of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, as a man, could only be in one place at one time. The Holy Spirit could work in all places toward all men. Jesus' new work was intercession for the saints and their ministries. This was the work of an advocate. This followed the work of atonement of the High Priest who presented the blood of sacrifice of the mercy-seat, as priest representing the people. This Christ did in the Heavenly Temple as our High-Priest once and for all, offering His blood as the perfect and final Atonement for our salvation. Christ continues in God's presence interceding for us, continuing to secure the mercy of God towards us, for our best welfare. He appears in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24), presenting the value of His spilt blood. All worlds were made subject to Him for the spread and welfare of His church.

### Verse 10.

While they looked steadfastly toward heaven, a cloud received Him. Therefrom He was hidden from their view. It is said that He would in like manner return "in the clouds". They had just asked if He would restore the kingdom at that time. Now with disappointment and amazement and curiosity they gaze upon the ascension.

At the same time, two men appeared. From what they wore, and the nature of their message, they must have been angels. They were sent to give comfort. They took on human form, as did the two who were present at the tomb, after the Resurrection. Clothed in white symbolized purity and was the commonly mentioned apparel of angelic beings. (Revelation 3:4.)

### Verse 11.

Their message: they greeted the disciples in general as "Ye men of Galilee", the place of most of their origin. They question why they are still looking up into heaven. He was not going to restore the kingdom. He was not going to return in a few moments. He had foretold this return to heaven, to the Father. They had a mission and a message to carry out.

"This same Jesus" would return from heaven (the immediate presence of God), from the right hand of God, in power, honor, and righteousness. This would be at the time of judgment (John 14:3). He will return in clouds "in like manner" as He left. His role as Mediator will have been completed. The Church will have been saved. It will be according to God's plan that He triumph over the wicked.

Lesson II Continued

## Verse 12.

The particular part of the mountain where they were was the eastern side, near the small village of Bethany. The distance was within the 2,000 paces or cubits – not quite one mile. This had been set by the Jewish leaders, not the law of Moses. This had come from the camp of the Israelites. No part was more than 2,000 paces from the tabernacle.

## Verse 13.

They arrived in Jerusalem, and went into an upper room. This had apparently been set aside for their assembly – the first chosen apostles named here: Peter, James, and John, Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, the other Judas, brother of James.

## Verse 14.

They persevered with their constant attention, praying for each other and the ministry of the word. This was done with "one accord", one mind. Their focus was the same, their desire to approach the throne of grace, seeking God's guidance and blessing for themselves and each other. Also mentioned are the women. These included those recorded by Luke 8:2,3; 23:49,55; 24:10; Matthew 27:55 – Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Jesus, the wife of Zebedee, Joanna, Chuzas' wife, and Susanna.

Others were not mentioned by name; sons of the relatives of apostles or of Jesus. At least one was with him in His travels (I Corinthians 4:5). Jesus' mother is particularly mentioned. She has been entrusted into John's care (John 19:2,27). This was her last mention in Scripture. Also Christ's half-brothers had become believers at some point; James mentioned first believing after the resurrection.

## Verse 15.

On one of the days between the Ascension and the day of Pentecost Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (about 12) and brought up a necessary business of the church. This matter was so important as to be brought before the entire congregation of the assembled believers, the first such call to make a decision.

## Verse 16.

"Men and brethren" was a customary form of address, especially towards those one respects and has affection for. Peter then refers to Psalms 41:9 as applied to Judas by Jesus in John 13:18, then to Psalms 69 (referred to in verse 20 – must needs be fulfilled). It is stressed that the Holy Spirit inspired David about Judas who guided the soldiers and Jewish leaders to Jesus.

## Verse 17.

This same Judas, numbered as one of the 12, chosen as an apostle by Jesus (Luke 6:13-16). His character was known to Jesus when He chose him. He was made treasurer, party to the most intimate contact with Jesus. Judas did not have any accusation against Jesus – neither with His moral character, nor Jesus' lack of political

Lesson II Continued

aspiration against Rome. It was, then, his desire to handle the money as treasurer that made Judas a traitor. This forced him to experience remorse to the point of suicide. He realized that Jesus was completely innocent of all of the charges brought against Him.

## Verse 18.

The 30 pieces of silver Judas had been given to betray Jesus, he returned to the Temple and threw the money down, rejecting the blood money. The chief priest used the returned bribe money to buy a potter's field (used to get clay) for burial for the poor. It is called "the reward of iniquity." The picture describes Judas as hanging himself, the rope breaking, then falling "headlong", or head first, as if he threw himself from a rock. The result was that he burst asunder - his bowels gushing out.

## Verse 19.

The action of the priests in the purchasing the field from the returned blood money became known. The field was renamed the field of blood as a reminder of Judas' act of betrayal. The Syro-Chaldaic word "Alceldama" meant literally "the field of blood".

## Verse 20.

Peter then quotes Psalm 69: though general and plural in the original, referring to Israel's enemies, he interprets it as referring to Judas. His death left his home desolate, with no one to ever inhabit it. This is the judgment against Jesus' betrayer.

The next part comes from Psalms 109:8 - "Let his days be few, and let another take his office." Judas was unworthy of his office, and by his death, left his place empty. The word translated "bishopric" does not affirm any particular office in the "church" that Judas held.

## Verses 21,22.

To take Judas' place, one must be a witness to the life and works of Jesus, beginning with the baptism of John. This was the foremost qualification. He must be from the 70 disciples. "Went in and out" describes constant companionship. This was from Jesus' baptism by John until the time He was taken up into heaven. This person must be ordained as equally qualified as Judas had been. Ordained means to be set apart to the sacred position, traditionally by the laying on of hands. The main point here is that he be a witness of Christ's ministry and resurrection.

## Verse 23.

Two men were set apart as candidates - most likely the oldest and most righteous in character. These two were about equal in these qualifications. One was "Joseph called Barsabas", son of Sabas, whose

## Lesson II Continued

surname was Justus, so-called as indicative of his integrity. The other was Matthias. Nothing additional is recorded about this man.

### Verse 24.

There was not general agreement, so they followed the Godly method, seeking an answer by prayer. They acknowledged God as the only One Who knows the hearts of all men, also Jesus (John 2:25; 6:64; 16:19). The regular use of the term "Lord" was used by the disciples in calling upon the risen Savior (Luke 24:52). They ask Him to show which of these two He has chosen as the best.

### Verse 25.

He will be taking the part, ministry, and apostleship from which Judas, by transgression, fell. He was to go to his own place. This must refer to the result of this act of betrayal and suicide: landing him in Hades, to await final judgment unto condemnation.

### Verse 26.

The casting of lots to decide a matter of great importance was traditional among the Jews. (I Chronicles 24:5; Numbers 26:55; Joshua 15,16,17.) Proverbs 16:33 - "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." The result of the lot showed that Matthias was reckoned as the 12<sup>th</sup> apostle. This is the last mention of him in the New Testament. There was no succession from the apostles, the office ceasing when they died. Only Paul was designated Apostle to the Gentiles, as the others were to the Jews. All were witnesses to the risen Christ.

The common way was to place the names on pieces of stone or wood, and put them into an urn. Also, other pieces naming the office were included, then others that were blank. The names were drawn at random to determine the outcome. The assumption was that God would direct the outcome according to His will. Thus the lot fell upon Matthias and his name replaced that of Judas Iscariot with the other 11 apostles.

This was the end and the only time that one was appointed to the apostolic office. Their role was unique and not to be repeated or carried on in the church. The only exception was the apostle Paul, by special commission as apostle to the Gentiles. The others were apostles to the Jews, as witnesses to His resurrection. All that came after were ministers of the words of the apostles. They were to establish, organize, teach, and govern the churches until Jesus returns to gather His church at the Rapture.

End of Chapter I. Next is Pentecost and Peter's Sermon.

### Lesson III

#### The Acts of the Apostles 2:1-21.

1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.  
 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.  
 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.  
 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.  
 5 ¶ And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.  
 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.  
 7 And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?  
 8 And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?  
 9 Par'thi-ans, and Medes, and E'lamites, and the dwellers in Mesopota'mi-a, and in Judea, and Cappado'cia, in Pontus, and Asia,  
 10 Phryg'i-a, and Pamphyl'i-a, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyre'ne, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,  
 11 Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.  
 12 And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?  
 13 Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.  
 14 ¶ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words:  
 15 for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.  
 16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;  
 17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:  
 18 and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:  
 19 and I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke:  
 20 the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come:  
 21 and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

#### Verse 1.

This refers to the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Passover, also called the feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22; Numbers 28:26; Deuteronomy 16:10). It was also a harvest festival. Two loaves of new meal were offered as first-fruits (Leviticus 23:17,20; Numbers 28:27-31). The day arrived. This explains the presence of the amount of strangers and foreigners in Jerusalem. Also, this would be the perfect time for the



Lesson III Continued

Holy Spirit to empower the preaching of the Gospel to this assembled multitude in the very city of the crucifixion and resurrection. Those that respond in faith will carry the Gospel message to their home regions.

It is assumed that the number included the 120 mentioned in Acts 1:15. They were in one accord in the same location. There is no detail as to the exact place or even day of the week this took place, nor is it necessary.

Verse 2.

What then happened was sudden and dramatic in its coming. This was a striking and memorable experience. A sound seemed to rush down from heaven. The suddenness and direction and intensity filled the house completely where they all were. The sudden sound was like that of a violent storm, invisible but with great force, representing the working of the Holy Spirit. The sound and the effects would accomplish God's mighty work among them. The sound filled the house. It must be noted that the sound was 'like' a rushing mighty wind, without the presence of the wind itself. This was no natural storm.

It has been suggested that the number involved indicates that it must have happened in the larger courtyard of a private house, rather than in a room, though it may have begun there. Then they saw what appeared as flames of fire, resembling tongues, on top of their heads. This designates anything narrowing to a point. Here describing the appearance of the flame, first irregularly, then each part, sat upon each one of them.

This was a direct and visible emblem of the promised descent of the Holy Spirit. This made it unique and unquestionably a special work of God, especially that of fire that did not consume. This was the baptism by fire predicted by The Baptist. It was also emblematic of the diversity of languages that were to be spoken and understood.

Verse 4.

They were all filled with the Spirit, under His sacred influence and supernatural power. They began to speak with other tongues (languages). This was given by the power of the Spirit, not languages these Galileans would be familiar with or even recognize. This was predicted in Isaiah 28:11 and applied in Corinthians 14:21. Jesus predicted in Mark 16:17 "...they shall speak with new tongues." This existed for some time in the early church: I Corinthians 12:10,11 - "divers tongues and interpretation of tongues." This was apparently to others besides the apostles. This was the empowering to reach all nations. This was necessary in the beginning. In modern times there are still languages that the Gospel has not been translated into, and missionaries have spent extensive periods of time learning new languages.

Miracles were used early on to be a powerful means of spreading the Gospel. However, this was a miracle to the heathen, that was a great contrast with the otherwise necessary time to learn a foreign tongue. The Gospel was preached in Arabia, Greece, Syria, Asia, Persia, Africa, Rome, each having their own unique languages.

It has been suggested that many wealthy Jews from foreign lands had residences in Jerusalem, to be able to often observe

### Lesson III Continued

ceremonies at the Temple. They are described as 'devout'. They were careful to observe God's commandments in religious observations, especially in prayer. Also, they were sincere and solemn. There were Jews at that time who were scattered into almost all nations. Those financially able would choose to be present whenever possible, to participate in the great festivals in Jerusalem, though there were synagogues in most countries. According to contemporary records, there were about 3 million people in Jerusalem when Titus besieged the city, near the time of Passover.

Those that had come together were confounded or confused. They could not understand or explain this occurrence. That Galileans spoke in languages they had not learned in various foreign lands was a complete surprise. This was noised abroad as a remarkable work: how was this possible? Most of those in the audience accepted this as a mighty display of the power of God.

That they were Galileans was observed as remarkable because those from this region were considered 'country': unschooled, without proper customs and manners. Their dialect was considered simple and corrupt. For them to speak correctly in languages of other nations was a great surprise. This pointed to it in such a striking manner that this must be a work of God. This is often God's manner of working to use those without education, talent, position, power, or pride.

Verse 8.

They hear their native language (from where they were born).

Verse 9.

The different nations (and therefore languages) are recorded. The list begins on the east and continues to the west. Parthia was a part of Persia, to the northeast of Media, separated from the Roman Empire by the Euphrates as its western boundary. Their language was Persian. The Medes lived west and south of the Caspian Sea. Persia was to the south, Armenia to the west, about the size of Spain. They were often connected with the Persians.

Elamites descended from Elam, the son of Shem. Chedorlaomar was the chief king (Genesis 14:4). Shushan was the most known city. Persia was east; Media was north and the Persian Gulf was south. They were known as war-like and excelled with the bow. It was between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in Hebrew Aram, now Syria. This was also Ur of the Chaldees, birthplace of Abraham (Genesis 11:27,28). The next, Mesopotamia, between the two rivers, with Babylon to the south. Armenia on the north, Syria on the west, Persia on the east. Syrian would have been the language.

In Judea, simply part of the enumerating of the extent of the languages. Cappadocia, a region in Asia Minor – west of the Euphrates and Armenia, and to the north, Pontus. To the west was Phrygia and Galatia. South was Mount Taurus, then Cilicia and Syria. The particular language of this region is not known. Probably a mixed dialect, Greek and Syriac. It was known as an eminently wicked place.

Pontus, another province of Asia Minor, north of Cappadocia. Peter addressed his letter to this place. This was the birthplace of Aquila, companion of Paul (Acts 18:2).

Lesson III Continued

Asia refers to areas west of the above, not individually named: Mysia: Aeolis, Ionia, Caria, and Lydia. Ephesus was the capital of this region, frequently called "Ionia".

Phrygia and Pamphylia, also in Asia Minor. Pamphylia on the Mediterranean; Phrygia bordered on Galatia, Cappadocia, and Pisidia. Their language would have been pure Greek, as colonies of the Greeks.

In Egypt, the language there was Coptic. A vast number of Jews lived there, so a good number would be present in Jerusalem at the great feasts. The Septuagint, the first translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek was done there. Libya was the general name for the rest of Africa. It here refers to the region nearest Egypt. Cyrene, about 500 miles west of Alexandria, Egypt. It is now known as Tripoli. It was Simon from this region who was compelled to bear Jesus' cross to Calvary (Matthew 27:32). No language name is known.

How many Romans were dwelling in Jerusalem, whether permanently or temporarily is not known. Latin was their language. A great many Jews then lived in Rome. Josephus writes that there were 8 synagogues there.

There were also Jews, native born, and proselytes, or those converted to the Jewish religion from the Gentiles. This was a unique characteristic of the Pharisees mentioned by Jesus (Matthew 23:15). Crete, island in the Mediterranean, 200 miles long, 50 wide, about 500 miles south of Constantinople (now Istanbul), west of Syria (about 50 miles). Greek was most likely spoken here.

Arabians in the peninsula between the Red Sea on the west and the Indian Ocean on the south of the Persian Gulf and Euphrates on the east. The language spoken there was Arabic.

#### Verse 11.

These various peoples acknowledged that they heard and understood the apostles speaking in at least 7 or 8 different languages or dialects of those languages (Jewish dialects). That they understood what they heard makes this a work beyond human abilities. They spoke only of the works of God.

Those converted at this time would carry the wonderful message to their home countries, which also prepared for the subsequent missionary efforts of the apostles who traveled to those lands. Churches began in most of those places and multitudes converted to the Christian faith. The great works of God preached here included the gift of God's Son, Jesus, His sacrificial death for others, the resurrection, the ascension, His teachings.

#### Verse 12.

Being in doubt means that this event was so unique that it was difficult to understand or explain. All were astonished.

Lesson III Continued

## Verse 13.

Some of the observers, mocking the idea that this was God's work, suggested that they were under the influence of new wine, or drunk. They derided the apostles as not intelligibly speaking recognizable languages, but the slurred speech of intoxicated men.

## Verse 14.

The bold and impetuous Peter, standing up with the 11, lifted up his voice, addressing the assembled multitude. He stood to defend the apostles of Jesus Christ the Savior and Jesus Himself. Curiosity had brought the crowd together, the perfect opportunity to proclaim the Gospel with the energizing power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is not recorded if all 12 spoke at the same time in different languages, or if they spoke in quick succession.

Peter addressed his word to Jews by birth (men of Judea) and all others, whether proselytes or strangers at that time in Jerusalem. This was a respectful introduction to what he was about to say to them. He proceeded to calmly explain their misunderstanding. They must listen carefully to his words to know the truth.

## Verse 15.

That it was about 9 o'clock in the morning would make it appear unlikely that these men would be drunk. It was the time for morning prayers. Also, drinking was traditionally done at night.

## Verse 16.

This was in fact a fulfillment of a prophecy of Joel. (Joel 2:28-32.) The following is a summary.

## Verse 17.

It shall come to pass in the last days or future times. These were the times of the Messiah which would have no end. These were the times of the spread of the Gospel, not the end of the world.

The description of pouring means communicating largely and freely as water comes from a fountain. The Holy Spirit will shed upon them abundantly, to influence, renew, and purify their hearts and souls.

"My Spirit" names the third person of the Trinity, as promised by Jesus, to complete the teaching and empowering to spread the Gospel to all men. The Holy Spirit as the source and communicator of all blessings of Christian experiences. He renews the strength of the heart (John 3:5). The source of the fruit of the the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-25; Titus 3:5-7). Also gifts (I Corinthians 12:4-10). This was uniquely seen on the day of Pentecost in the speaking of foreign languages and the conversion of 3,000.

Upon all flesh indicates all classes of rank and parts of society: old, young; rich, poor; servants, kings; men, women; etc.

Lesson III Continued

Acts 21 mentions Philip's four daughters that prophesied.

The outpouring of the Spirit begins the spread of the Gospel. The last days began with Christ's first coming and will end with His Second Coming. The natural phenomena of verses 19,20 had taken place on the day of the Lord's crucifixion. (See Joel 2:32 and also Romans 10:13.)

Next, the continuation of Peter's message. Identifying Jesus of Nazareth as the promised Messiah.

### Lesson IV

#### The Acts of the Apostles 2:22-36.

22 ¶ Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:  
 23 him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:  
 24 whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.  
 25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:  
 26 therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:  
 27 because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.  
 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.  
 29 ¶ Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.  
 30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;  
 31 he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.  
 32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.  
 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.  
 34 For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,  
 35 until I make thy foes thy footstool.  
 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

#### Verses 22-24.

The apostolic Gospel Message typically had four parts: 1. The announcement that the time of prophetic fulfillment had come. 2. The description of the ministry, death, and triumph of Jesus. 3. Quoting Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus fulfilled as the Messiah. 4. The call to repentance and faith.

At this point Peter has already quoted prophetic Scripture. Now he describes how Jesus fulfilled them: "mighty works and wonders and signs" only possible by the authority and power of God among the "men of Israel." They should have still been in the minds of the listeners, the general populace. They were "mighty works," signs of the age to come.

Yet Jesus had been condemned to death by the Jews. They were influenced by their leaders to demand His crucifixion. This was in fact part of God's plan. This does emphasize their guilt but leaves a way to forgiveness and reconciliation.

### Lesson IV Continued

The death sentence executed had been reversed by a higher authority. God raised Jesus up and loosed the bonds of death. He was resurrected unto glory.

Verses 25-28.

Peter quotes Psalms 16:8-11 - "because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." These words must refer to Messiah Who is Jesus and no one else. Only He was delivered from the corruption of the grave and raised from the dead. Peter testifies that he and the other disciples were actual witnesses to these events.

Verses 33-35.

Now that all this has taken place, Jesus is at God's right hand. He has poured out the Holy Spirit into His followers on earth. Those now present had witnessed the first outward manifestation. This was the third proof of God's plan for man's salvation through Jesus the Christ.

Psalms 110:1 records God's words to Messiah: "Sit thou on my right hand" (see Mark 12:35). Jesus foretold this in Luke 22:69: "From henceforth shall the Son of Man be seated at the right hand of the power of God."

Verse 36.

He is now proclaimed as Messiah and Lord. His Name is above every name (Philemon 2:9). This also makes Him equal with God (Joel 2:32).

Verses 37-42. Call to Repentance.

37 ¶ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Lesson IV Continued

Verses 37,38.

Peter's message had been effective. As a result of Peter's preaching, many in the audience were convinced of their sin. If they have thus cruelly treated Jesus, who had come to bring them salvation, then what hope could they now have? This was expressed by their response – asking Peter what they can do now.

Peter gives them great reassurance. There was still hope. They must repent of their sin and turn to God. They must then be baptized in the Name of Jesus, now accepted as their Messiah. Not only would their sins be forgiven, and in addition, they also would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, which the apostles had only recently received themselves.

Peter also requires their soon following baptism. The outward, public sign of the inner change. Two new features are added. First, "in the Name of Jesus," and receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Since Pentecost the Holy Spirit was given to all believers.

It can also be described as the sign of the final redemption at the Lord's return.

Verse 39.

The promise of the Gospel was extended not only to the present generation but to the following generations. Also to the people of Jerusalem, and those in distant lands, both Jews and Gentiles.

Two Old Testament prophecies are mentioned.

Isaiah 57:10, "...Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD;..." and Joel 2:32, "...for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call."

Verse 40.

This generation had been called, "a faithless and perverse generation," by Jesus (9:41). This was because they rejected Him. Those that now responded to the Gospel message were the faithful remnant, the center of the new Israel, and also the Christian Church.

Verses 41,42.

Those who believed, followed Peter's direction and were baptized, having also received the Holy Spirit. Jesus had told them (John 14:12) that, as a result of His returning to His Father, they would perform greater works than they had ever seen Him do. The 3,000 converts became the new Christian community based on the apostolic teaching. When finally written down, their record became what we know as the New Testament. What has traditionally been called the apostolic succession is most easily observed in the Christian churches that continue to base their beliefs and practices on the preaching and teaching of the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament.

Two activities of the beginning Christian community were named: "...in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Verse 42.) Apparently, the breaking of bread specifically signifies that there was the observance of the Lord's Supper ("This is My body which is broken for you"); the element that made an ordinary meal also a celebration and remembrance of Christ's sacrifice and promise.



### Lesson IV Continued

"In prayers" certainly refers to appointed times of communal prayer. There was also continued worship and prayer to God at the Temple (verse 46).

Verses 43-47.

43 ¶ And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;  
45 and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

These describe the regular activities of the Beginning Christian Church.

Verse 43.

The opening words describe the profound awe (fear) the believers were experiencing as a result of the life changing events, the preaching of Peter, their own repentance, and conversion to a faith in Christ's salvation. Many events were clearly supernatural signs and wonders done through the apostles. Peter's preaching included the prophecy of Joel that heralded the "great and notable day" would be heralded by wonders in the heavens and signs on the earth beneath.

Among the signs on the earth must be the mighty works and wonders and signs which God performed through the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now the culmination of the works and miracles of Jesus' ministry were being carried on by the apostles.

Verse 44.

The deep sense of their unity in their Messiah led them to be together, to hold things in common. They desired to join together their assets, food, and property, to be shared and used for all - the needs of each were to be met. Unity in the Messiah brought on the pooling of the property and assets to be shared by the community according to need.

Verses 46,47.

"And they, continuing daily..." In the weeks following the Pentecost, the believers met regularly in the Temple for public worship. They ate fellowship meals in each other's homes, "breaking bread" in accordance with Christ's request. The place where they gathered at the Temple was Solomon's colonnade, which went along the east side of the outer court.

The communal meals were to be eaten by householders. From house to house, there was a spirit of generosity and rejoicing. The Lord daily added to them those that were saved. They were joyfully welcomed into the community, to join the ranks of those Christ has

### Lesson IV Continued

accepted. All glory was given to God.

Acts 3:1-10. A Miracle of Healing and its Consequences.

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

2 And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10 and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

Verses 1-3.

Peter and John were on their traditional way of going to the Temple, for the appointed time of the evening oblation (offering) and prayer (about 3 p.m.). They were stopped by the sight of a lame beggar who had been placed at the foot of the steps that led up to the gate of the Temple Court. It was called "Beautiful" - identified by the Jewish historian Josephus as Corinthian bronze of exquisite workmanship. As they were approaching, the man asked for a donation.

Verses 4-6.

Peter and then John fixed their eyes upon the man. Peter directed the man to look at them. Apparently, this shows that the lame man had not looked up as usual. This led the man to surmise that these two must have something to give him - a few coins. What they offer was far more valuable, not silver or gold, but healing in the power of the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Peter tells the man to walk!

Verses 7,8.

Peter put action to his words, by taking the lame man's right hand and pulling him to his feet. That also became the moment when the healing was taking place. The man was immediately aware of

Lesson IV Continued

strength in his legs and feet. He stood up for the first time in his life. He became so excited that he tried walking, and succeeded. He then tried jumping. So happy was he that he walked and leapt, and joined the two disciples as they went into the Temple, and he was praising God.

Verses 9,10.

People naturally noticed this unusually loud and jumping man. They recognized the man as the lame beggar that had been seen regularly at the Beautiful Gate. They also knew that he was lame from birth. They were filled with wonder and amazement. This was a sign that the apostles of Christ had been given the same healing power and the message of forgiveness of sins. (As Jesus had done with the paralytic man in Mark 2:10.) Also, the realization of the prophecy in Isaiah 35:6 - "Then shall the lame man leap as a hart."

Next, Peter explains to the crowd that witnessed this event, giving all credit to Jesus.

Lesson V

## The Acts of the Apostles 3:11-26.

11 ¶ And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

12 And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13 The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.

14 But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16 And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17 ¶ And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

18 But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20 and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21 whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Gen. 22.18

26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Peter's address to the people gathered around the healed man in the Temple.

## Verse 11.

Apparently this took place on the three men's way out of the Temple on the eastern side – in the colonnade named Solomon's. At this point a large crowd had gathered around them. The former lame man was holding on to his benefactors. The crowd greatly marveled and must have seemed very anxious to find out what, and how, and when

### Lesson V Continued

this obvious miracle had taken place. The physical part was obvious – the man stood. Peter would now explain the spiritual and eternal significance of the miracle.

#### Verse 12.

He begins by assuring the crowd that what they are so surprised about should have been recognized as what could only be a work of God. Only He could bring about the healing of a lame man. Peter and John certainly had no such righteousness or power to bring about so great a miracle, so the crowd should not be staring at them.

#### Verses 13-16.

Peter gives a short reminder of Jewish history – the same God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their own fathers, is the source. He then adds that God has glorified His Son Jesus. He reminds them of what God did through the Sacrifice of His Son, now glorified. He includes their guilt in the condemnation and crucifixion. God triumphs by raising Him from the dead – he and John being witnesses. They had acted in the Name of Jesus, which the lame man had accepted in faith, wherein he was healed.

Peter reminds the crowd that they had asked Pilate to release a murderer to them when Pilate was prepared to release Jesus. Peter calls Jesus God's Servant, Whose suffering and exaltation was prophesied in Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12. Then he calls Jesus the Holy and Righteous One, the Prince of Life. Peter thus dramatically emphasizes the contrast between how men had treated Jesus and how God had.

Peter explains that this is no magic trick. The evidence is the man standing before them. Peter had not said magic words in telling the man to walk. It would not have had any effect. The cripple had responded in faith to Peter's words "in the Name of Jesus." With his faith came the power of the risen Christ to fill him with healing and strength.

#### Verses 17-18.

Peter gives the crowd the understanding that their actions against Jesus were through ignorance – they had not recognized their Messiah (not expecting the Suffering Servant but the conquering national hero). Neither had their rulers. Peter is proclaiming divine generosity to all those who played some part in having Jesus condemned to death and crucified. Christ's death also paid for their sins if they only confess those sins, repent, and turn to God and His Christ.

These events happened to Jesus in fulfillment of the prophecies that foretold the Suffering Servant, the Messiah Who would die for the sins of others. All of this Jesus had foretold and taught His disciples. Peter emphasizes that they (the crowd), he, and John were all witnesses to this great work of salvation of God.

#### Verses 19-21.

To take advantage of this salvation, they must change their attitude toward Jesus in line with what God has provided in raising Him from the dead. They must accept God's verdict in raising Jesus from the dead. Let them repent of any part they played in the murder

### Lesson V Continued

of their true Messiah. In their hearts they must turn back to God and seek the salvation procured by their Messiah's death. Even the sin they had unwittingly carried out – those that clamored for the death of the Author of Life could be found not guilty.

Jesus their Messiah was invested with this holy office by God Himself. He had been received up into the divine presence, and would remain there until the consummation of all that the prophets from earliest times had foretold. Gospel blessings that were to flow from His death and resurrection – that must spread abroad throughout the world. Then He would return from the right hand of power.

Israel as a whole declined the renewed offer of grace, by refusing to recognize Jesus as Messiah. One of the prominent themes of Luke throughout Acts was the progressive acceptance of Jesus by the Gentiles, during the same time as the refusal of Jesus by the Jews.

The promises from the Old Testament prophets included "times of refreshment" (which means a respite from the judgment pronouncement by Jesus). The repentance of the Ninevites following the preaching of Jonah deferred their destruction. The destruction of Jerusalem was not.

The Gospel blessings flow from the death and resurrection of Jesus. These blessings will spread throughout the world. Only then would He return to earth from the right hand of power in heaven. As on the day of Pentecost, this was another public call to repentance of the general population – another chance to accept Jesus as Savior and Messiah. History records that they did not so respond, and so the rapture of Jesus and the "grand consummation of all things are still future:" Hebrews 2:8: "we see not yet all things subjected to Him." Evidence is found in the prophets of the Old Testament.

Verses 22,23.

The first and greatest prophet, Moses, spoke of the day of Christ (Deuteronomy 18:15). God "will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren – him you shall heed..." The tradition by this time that this prophet could only be the Messiah, and only Jesus fulfilled them. This became a part of the apostolic preaching. Those that don't listen to or accept Him "shall be utterly destroyed from among the people."

Verse 24.

The next prophet (Samuel) and all that followed had their highest value of prophecy in those that Jesus fulfilled and those that Jesus was yet to fulfill.

Verses 25,26.

Those who were listening to Peter were not physically "sons of the prophets". However, they as Jews were heirs of the promises God had spoken through the Prophets. Also, they were "sons of the covenant" God made with Abraham. They were witnesses of the prophecies that had been fulfilled in Christ. The promise made to Abraham that "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed," (Genesis 13:3). Jesus was a descendant of Abraham (according to the flesh) then for all the families of the earth.

Lesson V Continued

Even as God had raised up Moses to turn the people from their sins, so He had raised up Jesus. They had not heeded Him. They must now heed the Gospel message of God's pardoning grace through the Sacrifice of Christ. They must not neglect this great offer.

Acts 4:1-4. Arrest of Peter and John.

1 And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them,  
2 being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.  
3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide.  
4 Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Verses 1,2.

The size of the crowd around the two apostles by this time draws the attention of the Temple authorities. The captain of the Temple police was in charge of keeping order. There was the possible danger of a riot. Other Temple authorities had strong objections to the message of the apostles - centered on Jesus. These objections especially concerned the assertion of his resurrection from the dead.

The Sadducees (the chief priests' families belonged to this group) did not accept the resurrection of the dead as Biblical truth. They must stop these two as quickly as possible from any further talk.

Verses 3,4.

Time had passed so that now it was near evening (near sundown). They could not legally hold an inquiry after dark. Therefore, the two were locked up for the night. They could not, however, undo the effect that the Word of Life had on many in the crowd who had accepted that Word. Approximately 5,000 men were added to the Church.

Next, Peter and John before the Sanhedrin.

## Lesson VI

### The Acts of the Apostles 4:5-12.

5 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders,  
and scribes,  
6 and Annas the high priest, and Cai'aphas, and John, and Alexander,  
and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered  
together at Jerusalem.  
7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power,  
or by what name, have ye done this?  
8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers  
of the people, and elders of Israel,  
9 if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent  
man, by what means he is made whole;  
10 be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by  
the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God  
raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you  
whole.  
11 This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which  
is become the head of the corner.  
12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other  
name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

#### Verses 5,6.

The next morning, the Sanhedrin met. The Sadducees were well represented: Annas the former high priest, and his son-in-law Caiaphas, the present high priest – who was also president of the Sanhedrin. It also well included a John (also known as Jonathan) and Alexander, and others kin to the high priest. The Jonathan reference may be another son of Annas who succeeded Caiaphas as high priest in 36 A.D. Only a few weeks had passed since these same officials thought they had gotten rid of Jesus and all He stood for.

#### Verses 7-10.

Once assembled, they called for Peter and John to be brought before them. We can assume that it was Caiaphas presiding – therefore asking the question. He wanted to know where "people like you" got authority to presume to act this way. This was derogatory. They were not educated or wealthy or important. What right had they to act in this way?

Christ had previously told the apostles (cf. Luke 21:14) they need not plan ahead or try to figure out what they would say when brought before adversaries to answer. He had promised wisdom from the Holy Spirit. Peter's reply shows this truth. He addresses the group as rulers and elders

He credits the wholeness of the known cripple to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. The healed man was obviously now present before all. Peter reminds these men that though they had crucified Christ, God had raised Him from the dead. He deserved all the credit for the healed man standing now before them.

#### Verse 11.

Peter goes on to preach the Gospel to this group by citing a well-known Old Testament prophecy: "The stone which the builders



### Lesson VI Continued

rejected is become the head of the corner." (Psalms 118:22.) This speaks of Messiah. Jesus used it at the conclusion of the parable of the vineyard (Mark 12:10).

The Jewish leaders refused to accept the Stone as their Messiah. God had given this stone the place of honor as the headstone of the corner – Jesus now sat enthroned at God's right hand. The power that had enabled this lame man to walk, could also bring him faith in Christ's salvation. True salvation included the physical healing, plus healing the spiritual disease of sin, and deliverance from coming judgment as well.

John spelled it out: There is no other name under heaven that is given among men wherein we must be saved. Israel had an opportunity to again accept the Gospel. Were the rulers going to persist in their repudiation of Jesus? Israel's salvation was dependent on their choices: If they refused the salvation in the Name of Jesus, and persisted in refusal and denial, they would call their nation and themselves unto destruction.

#### Verses 13-22.

13 ¶ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14 And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16 saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it.

17 But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18 And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.

22 For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was showed.

#### Verse 13.

The group watched the boldness of Peter and John – who were considered unlearned and ignorant. The people were shocked. They also took note of Peter and John, and recognized they had been with Jesus. As Jesus had, so they also accurately quoted Old Testament Scripture.

#### Verse 14.

The healed man stood with them. What could they say against that fact? So also as Jesus had shown His divine authority by mighty

### Lesson VI Continued

works, Peter and John claim the same authority – in the Name of Jesus.

Verses 15-17.

Peter and John were sent outside so that the council could discuss what action they could take. They had broken no law. What they did had made them popular with the general public. The council would be unwise to actually punish them. What they could also not allow was for these two men to continue teaching and healing in the Name of Jesus. They thought they had solved such threats of their authority and power by getting Jesus crucified. They certainly did not want to make more individuals (such as the other disciples of Christ) also become publicly active. They decided to threaten Peter and John with serious consequences if they did not stop speaking to anyone "in this name."

The council could not refute the central doctrine of Peter – Christ's resurrection. Obviously, if they had any contrary evidence (such as Christ's body), they would have brought it up – but they couldn't. Therefore, they could not refute either claim. Peter had spoken so boldly to the crowd and now before this council.

Verses 18-20.

Their only action was to tell the two apostles not to do it again: neither teach nor speak the Name of Jesus. They considered this a new law – a complete ban of any public mention of the name.

Verses 19,20.

Peter and John's response: this was demanding their giving up their personal commitments to God as eyewitnesses of Christ and His Gospel. They question these leaders' authority – was it greater than God's? They would have to judge according to their own consciences. As far as Peter and John were concerned, they can only speak of what they have seen and heard.

Verses 21,22.

The council dared no more than repeat their threats. They remained aware of the healed man and the gathered populace who praised God for this obvious miracle. Luke mentions specifically that the man was over 40 years old. No cure of his condition was ever seen at that age. The effect of their being arrested brought added attention to the two apostles, and the miracle, and then the fact that they were set free without consequence. These were both positive events in the spreading of the Gospel.

Verses 23-31. Peter and John rejoin their friends.

23 ¶ And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;

25 who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

### Lesson VI Continued

26 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28 for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30 by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31 And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

#### Verses 23-28.

They reported their recent experiences before the Sanhedrin. The gathered believers began to pray to God, creator of the universe, in Old Testament language. Then the beginning verses of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm are quoted as explicit references to the promised Anointed (Messiah) of Jehovah. The raging of the Gentiles against Jesus found its fulfillment in the role of the Romans who condemned and crucified Him. The "peoples" who imagined vain things were the various Jewish groups that acted against Jesus.

The king was Herod Antipas, the ruler represented by Pontius Pilate. All these acted against God's Christ, but all was promised and foreordained by the counsel of God. Specifically, the role of the Suffering Servant, God's holy Servant Jesus, the royal Son of God addressed in Psalms 2:7. Jesus was anointed as Messiah at His baptism, the obedient Servant throughout His ministry, and finally at His death.

#### Verses 29,30.

Their reaction to the high council's threatenings: even greater boldness of speech and asking God to grant healings and any other signs or wonders as they courageously spoke in the Name of Jesus. These would be evidence of God's complete approval and blessing, as the healing of the lame man had done.

#### Verse 31.

As another mighty sign, even as at Pentecost, the place shook like in an earthquake. The Holy Spirit filled them all. Such an outpouring caused them all to go forth to proclaim the Gospel to whoever would listen. Prayer, waiting upon God, a fresh filling (not baptism!) of the Spirit, and going out to spread the Good News of Salvation in Jesus' Name (not speaking in tongues). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is always positive and always centered in the love of the Father and the sacrifice and interceding present ministry of Jesus for each believer.

Next - All Things in Common; One Man's Generosity.

## Lesson VII

The Acts of the Apostles 4:32-37.

All Things in Common, and Barnabas' Generosity.

32 ¶ And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

35 and laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37 having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Verse 32.

This summary is similar to Chapter 2:43-47 - which describes the closing of the day of Pentecost. These words emphasize the communal, Spirit-filled attitudes of these believers. They considered their goods and property and other possessions as things to share with less well-off brothers and sisters. Those with property sold it and shared the proceeds. Many that had lands or houses sold them and brought what they had been paid. Whatever was sold - all was brought to the apostles. Distribution was unto each one who had a need.

The apostles, being the leaders, accepted the free-will offerings, but must have delegated the actual distribution to others. They were directly more involved in public preaching and teaching the Gospel of the risen Christ. At this point the approval of God was shown in mighty works, for which they had prayed, and the Jerusalem population looked on them favorably.

Verses 36,37.

Barnabas' Generosity. Barnabas was another Joseph, who the apostles had nicknamed Barnabas, which means "a true son of exhortation or encouragement." He was a Jew born from Cyprus, with relatives and even a piece of property here in Jerusalem. He was also a Levite. The only detail about his field is that he sold it and brought the money to the apostles, for sharing with the Christian community.

Acts 5:1-11. Ananias and Saphira.

1 But a certain man named Anani'as, with Sapphi'ra his wife, sold a possession,

2 and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, Anani'as, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was

Lesson VII Continued

it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Anani'as hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him.

7 ¶ And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

Total contrast to the previous verses, but recorded as part of the seriousness of a Christian's conscience, and the imperfections of these early believers. Also the emphasis is on the lying to Peter and also to the Holy Spirit. They acted as many others had.

Verses 1,2.

They had sold a piece of property. They decided to keep a part back for themselves (as they rightly could). But they put forward to the apostles that what they were giving to the community was the total purchase price that they had received. Ananias appears without his wife.

Verses 3,4.

Peter perceived (through the Holy Spirit is implied) the lie. He directly accuses Ananias of deceit, a thought-through, planned sin. He and his wife had plotted to portray their gift as everything they had given up. Peter explains to him that this is a grievous sin against the Christian community but also against the Holy Spirit, therefore against God Himself. Peter credits satan as the father of lies against God. Some commentators put blame on Peter for being harsh.

The temptation to want a greater reputation, fame, or popularity is a common fault. The fate of this man was an example and warning to all since. When the wife arrives, Peter proceeds to tell her that her husband is dead and buried, and since she agreed to his sin, she would share his fate. Those that buried her husband would also carry her out and bury her.

She immediately fell at Peter's feet and died. The same young men came in, took her out and buried her by her husband. Further fear spread among the whole church.

In I Corinthians 11:36 Paul speaks of the results of continual or unconfessed sin by a Christian, especially concerning the Lord's supper. This is risking serious judgment of the Lord - sleep - a euphemism for Christian death only. Salvation is not lost.

## Lesson VII Continued

Christ's death paid for believers' sins.

Verses 5,6.

Peter's words were a complete shock to Ananias - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, then physically. He fell down and died (heart attack). The natural response to all that were told - fear.

The "young men" carried out the necessary wrapping of the body and buried it. In that time and place, burial was necessary to be done quickly. Apparently the wife was not informed.

Verses 7-11.

By the time the wife came, about 3 hours have passed. Certainly Peter had time to reflect on the judgment on a man who tried to deceive the church, and the Holy Spirit. He now needed to find out if the wife was in on deceit or would tell the truth. So before he informed her of her husband's death, he asked her if she agreed with him. She did. Peter describes their action as "to try the Spirit of the Lord."

Verses 12-16.

12 ¶ And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women;)

15 insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

These verses describe the activities of the apostles - continuing to attend Temple worship. Signs and wonders were also done among the crowds that gathered around them in the general public area known as Solomon's porch. Both men and women believed their message of salvation (multitudes).

The news of healing caused great excitement and people brought their sick and possessed from all around Jerusalem. All were helped. Faith even considered Peter's shadow giving of healing power. Unbelievers - "the rest" of verse 13 - were afraid to get too close. Verse 16 closes with "they were healed every one."

Lesson VIII

The Acts of the Apostles 5:17-27. The Apostles Imprisoned and Examined.

17 ¶ Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

18 and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19 But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21 And when they heard that, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.

¶ But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23 saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24 Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25 Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26 Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27 ¶ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31 Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

Verses 17,18.

The high priest along with the rest of the Sadducees were so upset that they "rose up" and had the apostles arrested (again in the evening, planning to have their hearing the following morning).

Verses 19,20.

God had other plans. An angel of the lord was sent to open the prison doors, and told them to proceed with their ministry in the Temple - to speak the words of "this Life" - the Gospel of Jesus.

### Lesson VIII Continued

#### Verse 21.

They went into the Temple in the morning (day break) and began teaching. Also early in the morning, the high priest and his party called the "senate of the people of Israel", the Sanhedrin, to meet. They sent to the prison to have the apostles brought to them.

#### Verses 22, 23.

The officers now find that they are no longer in the cells. Yet, the cells were closed, and the keepers ("guards") still at the doors.

#### Verse 24.

They were perplexed - how could this obvious mystery happen? It could cause an uproar if voiced about - another supernatural event! They did not want this. What could they do now?

#### Verse 25.

Someone came to report that the men that had been in prison could be found in the Temple, standing and teaching the people.

#### Verse 26.

The captain of the temple police - with his senior officers ("lieutenants") - went to bring the apostles to the council. They were careful not to act forcefully because of the fear of the reaction of the crowds. The apostles peacefully agreed, without resistance, to go with the officers.

#### Verse 27.

They were brought and set before the council.

#### Verse 28.

The high priest reminds the apostles of the previous warnings they had been given. He then describes how they have done the opposite. They had spread this man's teaching throughout the city. The apostles were also laying the responsibility of "this man's" death at the Jewish leaders' feet.

The use of the term "this man" shows the reluctance of the Jewish leaders to say the name "Jesus". There is still this reluctance among orthodox Jews to this day. Some church groups have used the idea of Jews as "Christ-killers" as an excuse for anti-Semitic attitudes and actions throughout Church history, even up to this day.

#### Verses 29-39.

Peter speaks as representative of the apostles. His previous witness is repeated: contrasting what the Jewish leaders had done to Jesus, and what God had done. They had brought severest disgrace on Jesus by hanging Him on a tree - a death the Old Testament law pronounced as a curse (Deuteronomy 21:23). God had exalted Christ as Prince and Savior with authority to bless His people with forgiveness, by grace.

As before, the apostles must obey God, Whose authority is above that of even the Sanhedrin of Israel. They also cite the power



### Lesson VIII Continued

and authority of the Holy Spirit, also a witness of these things, and Who has been given to them that obey Him.

All these events were promised to the apostles by Christ as recorded in John 15:26,27 -

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

27 and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

There were no challenges or refutations concerning the facts of the case.

Verses 33-42. A Pharisee's Advice. The Apostles Released.

33 ¶ When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gama'liel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35 and said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theu'das, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 ¶ And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Verses 33-36.

The high priestly party could only see one solution to their anger and frustration. They wanted to put the apostles to death (most likely by stoning). They were the majority party of the Sanhedrin. But, they were not as popular or respected by the general population, compared to the Pharisees - the minority party. These men were revered as Old Testament scholars, educated and religious, teachers of the Mosaic Law.

The Pharisee Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder was exceptionally well respected at that time. He was accepted as the greatest teacher of the day. He was also a disciple of the previous greatest teacher,

### Lesson VIII Continued

Hillel. Saul of Tarsus was a disciple of Gamaliel.

At this time, Gamaliel rose to speak. He directed that the apostles be taken out for a few moments, so that he could speak particularly about what to do with them. Gamaliel's argument was that what God was directing would succeed – in spite of what they did. If God was not directing it, the movement would fail. Gamaliel reminds them of the most recent: Theudas who made great claims for himself, and gained about 400 followers. He was killed, and his followers were dispersed.

Verses 37-39.

Judas of Galilee revolted in 6 A.D., especially against the Romans, when tribute was demanded by Caesar. The Romans crushed the revolt, and the leader was killed. If this new movement is only of men, it will be overthrown. If it is of God, then this council, no matter what they do, will not be able to stop it. They must decide to not fight against God.

Verses 40-42.

Fortunately, Gamaliel's reasonable response was heeded. The minor punishment of flogging was meted out to the apostles, for going against the council's previous order. The council again commanded the apostles to not speak in the name of Jesus, then let them go. As far as obeying the council's warning – the apostles proceeded as they had before. They continued to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, in the Temple and in homes.

Next, a division of labor becomes necessary.

Acts 6:1-6.

1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Gre'cians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

2 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3 Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4 But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Proch'orus, and Nica'nor, and Timon, and Par'menas, and Nicolas a proselyte of An'ti-och;

6 whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

Verse 1.

The church's fast early growth brought a new problem. Two somewhat distinct groups were among the new multitude of converts. One was the "Hebrews", those natives of Israel, who spoke Aramaic.

### Lesson VIII Continued

The other, "Greek Jews", who spoke Greek – and were most likely natives of the dispersion of Jews among the countries of the Roman Empire. There was traditional tension among the two groups, and it showed itself here. In this case, the Greek Jews' widows were receiving less than the "Hebrew" widows. Widows were commonly among the poorest members of the early church. It may have been that "Hebrews" were in charge of the distribution.

#### Verses 2-4.

The apostles (the twelve) acted at once. They emphasized that their primary duty was to preach and teach the Word of God – not "serving tables". Their plan included the selection of men with certain qualities; among the brethren with good reputations, with wisdom, and filled with the Holy Spirit. The ideal was complete equality in distribution by the most trustworthy men of faith. With this provision, the apostles could confidently continue in prayer and spreading the Gospel.

#### Verse 5.

The proposal is accepted. Seven men were chosen. They all have Greek names (did they all belong to the Greek group?). Stephen is the first – described as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost". A significant description, considering the events that follow. Philip also has an important role later. Of the remaining 5, very little is known. Tradition mentions Prochorus as secretary of John the Evangelist, as bishop of Nicomedia, and as martyred at Antioch. The last one mentioned is identified as a proselyte (one not Jewish by birth) from Antioch (in Syria). By tradition, Luke himself was a native of that city.

#### Verse 6.

These 7 were presented to the apostles for their approval. This was done publicly by the laying on of hands, after the apostles had prayed. This was recognized as the official appointment of these 7 for a specific purpose. The traditional name in the church for those responsible for material affairs (mostly financial) was "deacon". This denotes "to serve", or minister. This was distinct from "bishop" or "elder".

Next, Stephen's Ministry Draws Attention.

## Lesson IX

The Acts of the Apostles 6:7-15. Opposition to Stephen.

7 ¶ And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

8 ¶ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9 Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyre'nians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cili'cia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11 Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

12 And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,

13 and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

14 for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

### Verse 7.

Luke here makes a general description of the spread of the faith in Jerusalem. A considerable number of the priests had joined the believers. These were of the Levitical order that served in the temple. They were socially and financially far below the wealthy chief-priestly families. It was the wealthy group that opposed the gospel continually and intensely - they had the most to lose: power, position, wealth.

### Verse 8.

Stephen was previously described (at the appointment of the 7 deacons) full of grace and power. So, here now are added the effects of his ministry. He wrought great signs and wonders.

### Verse 9.

Specific groups became fiercely hostile to him and his teaching. It is apparent that Stephen had carried his message to several of the synagogues in Jerusalem, that were mostly used by Jews from other countries: those from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia. Some of the men of those synagogues arose in opposition to Stephen and argued with him.

### Verses 10,11.

They could not equal his wisdom or spirit. They could not "withstand". From what is mentioned later (verse 14) it appears that Stephen based his teaching on the Old Testament, but the conclusions concerning Jesus as Messiah was what the greatest dispute centered around. They could not refute his reasoning, and thereafter simply found men who they talked into spreading outright lies about what

### Lesson IX Continued

Stephen had said. The accusation of blaspheming – against Moses, God, and the Temple. These threatened the whole stability of the religious center of activity (the Temple). It also threatened the basis of the entire religious life of the nation, the Law of Moses, and God Himself. This was all centered in Jerusalem. They felt that their national religion was seriously threatened.

#### Verse 12.

In a resurgence of religious fervor, the people were stirred up. Even the elders and the scribes were stirred up certainly with the support of the high-priestly party. Stephen was arrested and brought before the council.

#### Verse 13.

They had prepared false witnesses with highly charged accusations relating to the Temple and the Law.

#### Verse 14.

They then quoted him as saying that "that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." These are very similar to the charges against Jesus (Matthew 26:59-61; Mark 14:55-59). What Jesus actually said is recorded in John 2:19-21 – the temple He spoke of was His body, which He would raise up on the third day. Jesus also said that "one greater than the Temple is here" (Matthew 12:6). This meant the end of the need for the whole sacrificial system, which took place in the Temple, including the ceremonial laws. All those were to point to Christ. Unfortunately, this was not recognized.

#### Verse 15.

While his accusers spoke against him, Stephen stood with his face aglow, at peace and in the presence of God. This is described as a face like an angel.

#### Acts 7:1-36. Stephen's Defense.

1 Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

2 And he said,

¶ Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopota'mi-a, before he dwelt in Haran,

3 and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee.

4 Then came he out of the land of the Chalde'ans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

5 And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.

7 And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said

Lesson IX Continued

God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8 And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so Abraham begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat the twelve patriarchs.

9 ¶ And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

10 and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11 Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13 And at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14 Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15 So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16 and were carried over into Shechem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem.

17 ¶ But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

18 till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 ¶ And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25 for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them; but they understood not.

26 And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Mid'i-an, where he begat two sons.

30 ¶ And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Si'nai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

### Lesson IX Continued

32 saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 ¶ This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

Stephen presents a defense of Christianity as God's appointed way of worship. The charges against him were confused and garbled, but his explanation sets forth God's truth, and the new way of worship. One point was concerning God. He is not limited to one place or method of communication. So also God's people were not limited either by any particular place or time. Another element was the emphasis on the rejection of Jesus as Messiah, as well as Israel historically rejecting and / or killing the Old Testament prophets. He also emphasizes the universal nature and future of the Gospel.

#### Verse 1.

Caiaphas was high priest until 36 A.D. - therefore he presided over the Sanhedrin. So also he presided on the previous occasion when similar charges were brought against Jesus. He asks Stephen if these things are so. Certainly he hopes Stephen says something incriminating.

#### Verses 2,3.

Stephen has a reply ready. It forms a historical recapitulation of how God intervened throughout Israel's history. This form was well-established in Jewish tradition as a protestation of faith. This form also includes the repeated rejection of God, His ways, His prophets, by the majority of the people of Israel.

This begins with the call of Abraham to the building of Solomon's temple. Three main topics: 1) the patriarchal period; 2) Moses and the Law; 3) the tabernacle, then Temple.

He begins by introducing the themes, then moves on to the charge of blasphemy against God. First was the period of the Patriarchs. God summoned Abraham from his home in Mesopotamia to a place unknown to him. He trusted in God and remained a pilgrim upon the earth (Genesis 12:1), first from Ur then from Haran when his father died (Genesis 15:7).

#### Verses 4,5.

Abraham journeyed on to Canaan, where he had no permanent habitation. It was the promised land, but to his posterity even before he had any children.

Lesson IX Continued

Verses 6,7.

Also, his descendants would leave that land to live in a foreign place where they would end up oppressed and in service to others for generations. At the end of the appointed time, God would bring them out with a strong hand to bring them back to Him and the promised land of Canaan.

Verse 8.

The sign of circumcision was given to Abraham as the outward token of God's covenant with him. That Abraham accepted this for himself and his descendants was an act of faith. This was passed down from generation to generation, from Isaac, to Jacob, to his twelve sons, and onward among the twelve tribes of Israel.

Verses 9,10.

Even in those earliest of times, there was turmoil. The 10 elder brothers sold Joseph into slavery in Egypt. God guided Joseph's fortune in Egypt into his becoming the #2 man.

Verses 11-16.

God worked this out for the brothers when the great famine forced them to go to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph had foreseen (through correctly interpreting Pharaoh's dream), and made provision for, surplus grain for the lean years. The second time, he made himself known to them. They had not recognized him the first time. Then the whole family, 75 people, came and settled. After Jacob, and then the brothers died, they were buried in Canaan - the land promised to their children as their inheritance. Their sepulchre was a token of their faith - the one bought by Abraham in Schechem.

Verses 11-16.

The people stayed in Egypt and greatly multiplied. This continued until the time neared for God to bring them out to possess the land of Canaan. Apparently they were well treated until a pharaoh came into power long after the time of Joseph. He disliked their increasing population, so put them under severe labor, and finally compulsory killing of babies.

Verse 20-22.

Every male child Israelite was to be put out to die. Moses' parents kept him hidden for 3 months, then put him in a basket, discovered by Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him. He was raised as her son, as a royal prince. He was educated and described as "mighty".

Verses 23-28.

Moses, at 40, chose to help his fellow Israelites. He was called by God for that purpose, but they did not want or accept him, or his help in leaving Egypt. Stephen mentions these as precursors to the Israelites rejecting their greatest promised deliverer, Jesus Himself.



Lesson IX Continued

Verses 29-34.

Moses' rash action in killing an Egyptian bully became quickly voiced about, forcing him to leave Egypt and find refuge in northwest Arabia. He became a sojourner in a foreign land (Exodus 2:22). Out in the Mt. Sinai wilderness, God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and spoke. This Gentile territory became holy ground only because God chose to reveal Himself to Moses there. This was for the promised purpose of sending Moses to bring His people out of Egypt.

Verses 35,36.

God chose the man rejected by the people the first time. When he came to them again, they had no other choice. He had proof of his authority from God, the wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for 40 years.

Next, Stephen quotes Deuteronomy 18:15, where Moses promises a prophet like unto him (as Peter had previously done).

Lesson X

## The Acts of the Apostles 7:37-53. Stephen's Speech.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Si'nai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us:

39 to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40 saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41 And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42 Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness?

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44 ¶ Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen.

45 Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Joshua into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David;

46 who found favor before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47 But Solomon built him a house.

48 Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet,

49 Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?

50 Hath not my hand made all these things?

51 ¶ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers:

53 who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

## Verses 37-41.

Stephen quotes the Scripture about the prophet like unto Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15). Peter also quoted this Scripture previously, before this group (Acts 3:22).

In the wilderness, Moses led the people of God (the Old Testament church). They received the Law of God, and had the "Angel of the Presence" with them. They were far away from the promised land and the holy city. They were never content. They repudiated Moses' leadership. They disobeyed him and God.

## Lesson X Continued

Now, Stephen was accused of blasphemy against Moses and the Law. These descendants of those that rebelled against Moses, have now rejected the prophet greater than Moses. The Israelites in the wilderness had desires to go back to Egypt. They wanted material blessings and comfort. While Moses was in the Mount, they forced Aaron to make the idols of gold. They were not content with the invisible presence of God. They rather "rejoiced in the works of their hands." (Psalms 115:4; 135:15.)

Israel's history of idolatry brought prophet after prophet preaching to the people of repentance. The people's stubbornness brought them to destruction and deportation (the exile to Babylon). To Stephen, all these actions now reached their peak in the repudiation of God's Son.

Verses 42,43.

A summary from Amos 5:25-27 is now brought forth – the worship of the host of heaven, the planetary powers represented by the gods and goddesses of that mythology. It is identified also as a result of God's judgment: "God turned and gave them up to serve the host of heaven." What men continually choose, God binds to them with the associated consequences. The idols they chose could not help the people of Israel when the Assyrians overran the northern kingdom and brought them into exile. Nor could they help the southern kingdom from the Babylonian exile more than a century later.

Verses 44,45.

Stephen now counters the accusation of blasphemy against God (against the Temple). The Temple was the dwelling-place of God among the people in the wilderness. They disregarded the divine witness and importance of this shrine. It was constructed in every detail according to the pattern that Moses had been given on the mountain. When the people finally went into the promised land under Joshua, they brought the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant which contained the tables of the Law. This remained until the final conquering of all Canaanites by David. It remained as the witness and symbol of God's presence and provision for his people's salvation.

Verses 46,47.

David longed to build a permanent Temple. Stephen speaks words fleshed out in Psalms 132:2-5:

2 how he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;  
 3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;  
 4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids,  
 5 until I find out a place for the LORD, a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

David was told (through Nathan) that a son of David would arise, and build a house for God (2 Samuel 7). The early Christians interpreted the parallel promise to this son of David (Jesus) – He would have His throne established forever.

## Lesson X Continued

Luke 1:32,33.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

33 and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

The new Temple is Christ Himself, along with His elect – both Jews and Gentiles. It began with His resurrection – the temple of His body, raised up on the third day.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:19,20 -

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Solomon's Temple is quickly introduced and dismissed – as not achieving the desire of David. Solomon was witness to the fact.

I Kings 8:27.

27 ¶ But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?

Verses 48-50.

Stephen is arguing the concept that the Temple couldn't cause God to stay put, to become limited by a time and place. God's plan for man's salvation could not be limited. Stephen has brought this out concerning the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament. This logically leads to the description of Christ's followers as the Church Invisible where ever they are – a church made without hands.

Verse 51.

Stephen now attacks the Council. He has cited examples throughout Israel's history, of the people's rejection of God, His Law, and His Prophets. The present generation did, and continued to reject God's messengers – specifically Jesus, who they betrayed and murdered. Perhaps this would shock the consciences of some that heard him, and lead to repentance. The word "stiffnecked" had been used by God before in the Old Testament to describe the people of Israel (Exodus 33:5).

"Uncircumcised in heart and ears" speaks to their unwillingness to heed God's revelation and take it to heart. Though they were circumcised as Jews that was merely physical.

Verse 52.

Though the people of Jesus' day built monuments to the prophets and claim they would not have treated God's prophets as their ancestors had, Stephen rightly points out that they are presently showing complete hostility to God's prophets. The prophets

### Lesson X Continued

killed before were the ones who foretold the coming of the Righteous One. Now, this generation had caused the cruel death of the promised Righteous One.

#### Verse 53.

The purpose of the nation of Israel was to prepare the way for the One Who was to save them from their sins. The nation had resisted and rejected that One through Whom the divine plan was to be brought to fruition. Now that God had spoken to the nation by the Promised Messiah, it had decisively rejected Him.

#### Acts 7:54-8:1. Stephen Is Put to Death.

54 ¶ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1 ¶ And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

#### Verse 54.

Stephen's speech reached its zenith by focusing on the present group's rejection of God's greatest prophet, their guilt and persistent opposition to God's ways. We see their increasing anger, vexation, and rage reach the boiling point. We can try to imagine their expressions – here described as gnashing their teeth at him. This would have included angry words and expressions.

#### Verses 55-56.

The description of Stephen is in complete contrast. He remains calm, as guided by the Holy Spirit. As his gaze continued heavenward, he was given a vision of Jesus, the Son of Man, standing at God's right hand. He related his vision to the crowd actively reviling him. These words were the same as those prophesied by Jesus Himself before some of the same men (Mark 14:62). As Jesus had been found guilty of blasphemy, they must now also judge Stephen guilty. That Christ was at God's right hand meant that the Temple, and all its importance and traditions, were now supplanted by a more direct and universal method of access. Temple ritual was now obsolete. Access to God was no longer limited to Jews but open to all.

Lesson X Continued

That Jesus is here described as "standing" suggests that Jesus "seated" at God's right hand does not limit Him to remain seated at every moment. He could stand whenever He so desired: such as at this moment Stephen's witness of his heavenly vision and imminent martyrdom.

Verses 57,58.

That Stephen identifies Jesus as the Son of Man at God's right hand was the final height of blasphemy to those gathered against him. We can imagine their crying out loudly to protest what he was saying, and to drown out anything else he might try to say. They also "stopped their ears". Their rage knew only one way to end this - the mob grabbed him and took him outside of the city. They proceeded to stone him to death. The witnesses were the central actors in this action. They placed their outer garments near Saul (young man) to be looked after while they exerted themselves in throwing stones to execute Stephen.

Verses 59,60.

As he was being stoned, he committed his spirit to his Lord, Jesus. He also echoes what Jesus uttered from the cross - mercy upon those that were killing him. These were Stephen's last words. Luke uses gentle words to describe this outwardly brutal experience - "he fell asleep." This describes the peaceful spirit of Stephen.

Acts 8:1.

The previously mentioned Saul is again identified as a consenting witness. However, it seems likely that at some point Paul spoke to Luke concerning his observations of Stephen's countenance and final words. This he openly related, even though it was before his conversion, when he was actively trying to preserve the old ways and stamp out this upstart faith.

Next, Persecution and Dispersion.

## Lesson XI

The Acts of the Apostles 8:1-8. Persecution and Dispersion.

- 1 ¶ And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.  
 2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.  
 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.  
 4 ¶ Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.  
 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.  
 6 And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.  
 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.  
 8 And there was great joy in that city.

### Verse 1.

Stephen's death signaled the beginning of a general persecution of believers in Jerusalem. The main target seems to have been those that were not residents of Jerusalem. Stephen had been a leader of this group. They scattered throughout the nearby regions of Judea and Samaria. The apostles remained in the city.

### Verse 2.

Fellow believers buried Stephen, and expressed great lamentation. In Acts 1:8, Jesus predicted "... and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria..." This began as a persecution-caused dispersion.

### Verse 3.

Saul of Tarsus now became the active leader of this new move against believers. He obviously had authority from the leaders of the Sanhedrin. He was seriously concerned these believers in the new faith threatened what he believed and practiced as the true faith. He believed Jesus had been an imposter, a false Messiah. He went into accused people's homes and had men and women forcefully dragged out and put into prison.

### Verse 4.

Those that were scattered among the Gentiles continued the spreading of the Good News of Salvation in Christ. This was the beginning. Believers carried the message further and further as time passed.

### Verse 5.

Also one of the Hellenist leaders, Philip went from Jerusalem, north into Samaria, spreading the Gospel. Traditionally, the Samaritans were looked down upon by the Jews. This was the result of the foreign settlers placed there by the Assyrians. The upper

Lesson XI continued

class was deported when the northern kingdom of Israel was defeated. The resulting mix of peoples were considered racial and religious half breeds. They also built a rival temple on Mt. Gerizim. It had been destroyed over 100 years before Christ's time. The animosity remained.

It was a courageous act for Philip to go to proclaim the Gospel to these outcasts. They did, however, believe in the promised Messiah – as like unto Moses the prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15), who would restore the true worship of God.

Verses 6-8.

Whatever city it was, Philip's preaching was followed by great signs. These included healings, restoration, casting out demons. These were considered confirmation of God's blessing on His message of salvation. Joy was a natural result of both experiences.

Verses 9-13. Simon the Sorcerer.

9 ¶ But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:  
 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.  
 11 And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.  
 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.  
 13 Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Verses 9-11.

Simon Magus – a Samaritan who had amazed the general population of Samaria with his sorcery. They accepted him as having the power from God – as he professed himself to be.

Verse 12.

The preaching of Philip brought a great many to faith in Christ. Both men and women were baptized. Simon also believed and was baptized. He stayed with Philip and was amazed by the signs and miracles that followed. Simon's motives, subsequent events show, were partly selfish.

Verses 14-24. Peter and John Sent to Samaria.

14 ¶ Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:  
 15 who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:  
 16 (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)



Lesson XI continued

17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19 saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20 But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23 For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

Verse 14.

Philip's success in spreading the Gospel in Samaria is reported to the apostles in Jerusalem. These two leaders are sent to assess this ministry.

Verses 15-17.

Upon inspection they find that these believers were baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus and had not received the Holy Spirit. Peter and John prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit, and with the laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit came upon them. The result was similar to the disciples at Pentecost. It is generally accepted throughout the New Testament that the Holy Spirit begins indwelling each Christian when they first believe. It appears that an outward sign was needed in this instance to legitimize this beginning Samaritan Church. This is because of the traditional attitude against Samaritans by the people of Jerusalem. Thus this event, the presence of Peter and John, confirmed the full and equal status of all believers in Christ.

Verses 8,9.

The signs accompanying the Spirit's coming were impressive enough to make Simon Magus desire the same power. Since it appeared to be connected to the laying on of hands, he expressed his wish by offering to buy Peter and John's secret. The term "simony" comes from this person's evil desire.

Verses 20-23.

The reaction to his request shows how wrong his understanding of the blessing, the free gift of God, was. He thought it was a "trick" like what he had formerly practiced. He is severely rebuked.

Lesson XI continued

He was thinking selfishly – thus wickedly. This showed a complete misunderstanding of the Holy Spirit and its purpose.

Verse 24.

His heart was not right with God, but in the hand of iniquity. This rebuke by Peter actually scared Simon. He asked Peter to pray for him that he may escape the judgment that his wickedness deserved. We hear no more of this man. This was recorded that a sinner still sins after accepting Christ. We do not become perfect. We continue to need forgiveness.

Verses 25-40. Philip and the Ethiopian.

25 ¶ And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

26 ¶ And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, 28 was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Isaiah the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the Scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 in his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same Scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip was found at Azo'tus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesare'a.

Lesson XI continued

Verse 25.

On their way back to Jerusalem, the delegation preached the Gospel to the many villages of Samaria they passed. It is implied by the following event that Philip returned with Peter and John.

Verse 26.

Philip is divinely called by an "angel of the Lord" to arise and go to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza - both a downward and desert area.

Verses 27,28.

A covered conveyance was traveling southward. Within the treasurer of the Ethiopian court was seated. This was the return journey from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This area is the same as the modern Nubia - from Aswan south to Khartoum. On the way he sought to benefit from the traveling time by reading Scripture. In this case it was Isaiah.

Verses 29-31.

Philip was told by the Spirit to go up to the wagon. As he did, he heard the Ethiopian reading aloud from Isaiah, a prophecy. This was an opportunity to speak - Philip asks him if he understood what he was reading. The man admits that he didn't - he needed a guide. He invites Philip to come up and sit beside him.

Verses 32,33.

The Scripture being read was Isaiah 53 - the Suffering Servant. Jesus identified and fulfilled this prophecy (as well as Isaiah 11 and Daniel 7:13) by His own life and sacrifice to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 1:11). Luke quotes the verse being read (Isaiah 53:7).

Verses 34,35.

The Ethiopian's question - was the prophet talking about himself, or someone else? Beginning with this Scripture, Philip explained how Jesus fulfilled this prophecy and how His perfect life was an offering for sin. He explained about Jesus' death, and how His triumphal resurrection brought forgiveness, and redemption with God.

Verses 36-38.

Philip apparently had included in his exposition what the believer's response to this Good News should be. Repentance and baptism and the public profession of faith as entrance into the Church.

At some further point in their journey toward Gaza, running water was observed. The Ethiopian sees this as the immediate opportunity to complete his new profession of faith. He asks Philip if anything prevents his being baptized right away. The wagon is stopped. They both go down into the water and Philip baptizes him.

Lesson XI continued

Verse 39.

The joy that accompanies the new birth was expressed by the Ethiopian and he then continued on his way to his home in Ethiopia, carrying with him his new faith. According to tradition (Irenaeus), he became a missionary among his people.

Philip, on the other hand, is drawn away by the Spirit again - this time at Azotus - an old Philistine city formerly called Ashdod, about 20 miles north of Gaza. He preaches the Gospel in all the cities he passes through along the coastal road north until he reached Caesarea. He seems to have settled there. He is not mentioned again until Chapter 21:8. By then he had four daughters old enough to be prophetesses of the new faith.

Lesson XII

## The Acts of the Apostles 9:1-31. Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

1 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,  
2 and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.  
3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:  
4 and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?  
5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.  
6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.  
7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.  
8 And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.  
9 And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.  
10 ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Anani'as; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Anani'as. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.  
11 And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,  
12 and hath seen in a vision a man named Anani'as coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.  
13 Then Anani'as answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:  
14 and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.  
15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:  
16 for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.  
17 And Anani'as went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.  
18 And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.  
19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.  
¶ Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.  
20 And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.  
21 But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief

Lesson XII continued

priests?

22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him:

24 but their laying wait was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25 Then the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.

26 ¶ And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Gre'cians: but they went about to slay him.

30 Which when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Caesare'a, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 ¶ Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

Verses 1-2. Saul's Vision on the Road to Damascus.

This continues the story of Saul of Tarsus briefly mentioned in 8:3. Later, he himself describes his actions at this time (26:11): "In raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities."

Here he boldly goes to the high priest for letters of commission to the synagogues of Damascus that he would arrest any Christians that had fled there from Jerusalem. He would then bring them bound, back to Jerusalem. Obviously the high priest had this authority, being the head of the Jewish state - this upheld by the Roman authority. The great excuse was to maintain good public order.

Christianity is here called "the Way" (also later in 19:9,23; 22:4; 24:14,22). Apparently it was used by early believers to describe their new "way of life", and / or "way of salvation". Jesus had said, "I am the Truth, the Way, and the Life."

Verses 3-6.

Accompanied by an escort (temple police?), Saul had nearly reached the city of Damascus when his life was forever changed. It was about noon (22:6). Suddenly a light brighter than the sun shone on him. He fell on the ground. A voice spoke in Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Injury to His followers is considered as having been done to Him.)

Paul recognized the origin of the voice as from above, therefore from a heavenly presence - hence his question, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply "I am Jesus..."

Next is a proverb - "it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." It refers to the pointed goad used to prod an ox to move

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forward. To kick against the goading was pointless and could cause greater pain or injury. It was to signify the pointlessness of rebelling against lawful authority. Jesus knew it was God's will that Paul would come to faith in Him – but that he had stubbornly acted in the face of things that were pointing and pushing him to that faith (i.e. the experience of Stephen's martyrdom).

## Verse 6.

The response - "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" He is told to arise and go on into the city, and he will be told.

## Verse 7.

Those traveling with Paul were also stopped and stunned by the blazing light. What they heard was not clear to them – though they heard Paul talking, they could see no one. They therefore, stood speechless.

## Verses 8,9.

Having been blinded, Paul was led by hand into the city, where arrangements had been made for his stay. Three days he stayed, unable to eat or drink.

## Verses 10-12.

Saul was given a new vision where he sees a man named Ananias come to him, lay his hands on him, and his sight is restored. Ananias received a vision of the risen Christ, to do the above named deed. Obviously the Gospel had spread to this city, for he was certainly a believer.

## Verses 13,14.

Obviously, also, news of Saul's activities were known in persecution of Christians in Jerusalem. In addition, about his mission of arresting believers in Damascus – with the authority of the chief priests. Ananias called Jesus "Lord", and identified those persecuted as "Thy Saints", and "all that call on thy name."

## Verses 15,16.

Ananias' fear is over-ruled. This man was Christ's chosen vessel. He will carry the Gospel to the Gentiles specifically, as well as kings, and also Jews. He was now converted and was destined to suffer for Jesus much more than he had inflicted on others.

## Verse 17.

Ananias did as he was instructed. He even addresses him as 'brother' Saul. He mentions that he had been told about the Lord's appearance to him on the road. He has come to restore Saul's sight and pray for the filling of the Holy Spirit. What Ananias said confirmed the vision and the commission by Jesus. This was a direct call upon Paul as Apostle to the Gentiles. It was not tied to the apostles or any leader among the Christians at Jerusalem.

His words to Saul only included the direct quoting of the words he received from Christ. He was the means, by laying on of hands, that the power of the risen Savior restored Paul's sight and

Lesson XII continued

filled him with the Holy Spirit. Both necessary for the service Paul was called upon to perform. Ananias is not mentioned again.

Verses 18,19.

A flaky substance fell from Paul's eyes - his sight was then restored. He got up and was baptized (presumably also by Ananias). Also, for the first time in three days, Paul ate a meal, and regained some strength physically. Paul remained in Damascus for many days in fellowship of the local Christians.

Verse 20.

He then began to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues.

Verse 21.

The first reaction was shock. By this time he had become known as a persecutor of those that believed in Christ in Jerusalem. They also knew that his trip to their city was with the authority of the chief priests to arrest and bring Christians back to Jerusalem to be tried and convicted.

Verse 22.

Paul now spoke with the authority of Jesus Himself to proclaim His Gospel. He was now increased in strength and was confounding the Jews by his argument, explaining clearly that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Christ - the Savior.

Verses 23-25.

The angry Jews eventually decided that Paul had to be killed. Paul mentions his escape from this city in Galatians 1:17. The Jews put people at the city gates to catch him when he tried to leave. He learned of the plot. "The disciples" proves that there were converts to Christianity under his preaching. They took him to a house that had a window in the city wall. He was lowered from that window in a large basket by night, and escaped. In Galatians 1:18 it is mentioned that about three years after his conversion, he left Damascus and went back to Jerusalem.

Verse 26.

Two problems faced Paul in Jerusalem. His former colleagues had heard of his defection to the 'enemy camp'. The disciples, on the other hand, were still suspicious - still remembering his past zeal in persecuting believers. He could be pretending to have changed to gain their confidence, and thus find evidence to more forcefully persecute and arrest the entire group.

Verse 27.

Barnabas, whose name means 'son of encouragement', took up his cause and explained the events of Paul's conversion - that the Lord had appeared to him and Paul had spoken to Him. Following this event he had boldly preached in the Name of Jesus. Apparently Barnabas had some prior acquaintance with Paul and the changes that had taken place in Damascus. Barnabas was obviously well respected,



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so his vouching for Paul's conversion was accepted.

According to Paul's account in Galatians 1:18 he met only Peter and James (brother of Jesus) on this visit. Apparently Paul took up the reaching out to the Hellenists in Jerusalem, formerly done by Stephen. To these men, Paul was a traitor - having agreed to Stephen's death, yet now taking Stephen's place. Their reaction was quick, and included violence. They sought to kill him also.

Verse 30.

His newly acquainted brothers got him out of the city. They brought him to Caesarea on the Mediterranean. From there he was sent to his native Tarsus, the greatest city of the Roman province of Cilicia. We don't hear about Paul again until Acts 11:25. This was some years later.

Verse 31.

Peace and prosperity for the beginning church. This was basically the Jerusalem believers after the dispersion to the surrounding areas of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. This was still a Jewish population. The importance of Saul's conversion will later be described as the main force of the spread of the burgeoning church among the Gentiles. His birth, education, and familiarity with Greek culture, as well as his Roman citizenship would be instrumental in reaching out to the Gentile world.

After Paul's conversion, there obviously was no other Jewish zealot to take up the cause he now abandoned. This left the persecution without a leader and allowed the church to continue the education and maturing of the church. The Holy Spirit brought comfort, and converts continued to be added to the church.

Next, Peter in Western Israel.

### Lesson XIII

The Acts of the Apostles 9:32-43. Peter in Western Israel.

32 ¶ And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda.

33 And there he found a certain man named Aene'as, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34 And Peter said unto him, Aene'as, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35 And all that dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 ¶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tab'itha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: 1 this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tab'itha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43 And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

Verse 32.

Peter traveled to Christian groups, scattered into different communities in Judea. Lydda was one of these.

Verses 33-35.

There, one believer was named Aeneas who had been paralyzed for 8 years. Peter addressed him by name, saying: "Aene'as, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed." He did so. The news of this miracle quickly spread throughout the neighboring area – the coastal plain of Sharon. Many came to see him and turned to the Lord. Many Gentiles also lived in these regions, and were among the converted.

Verses 36-38.

Joppa (today Jaffa) on the coast, about 10 miles northwest of Lydda. Here also were a group of believers. One of their group – a woman named Tabitha (meaning gazelle, Dorcas in Greek) – died. She was greatly loved because of her countless deeds of kindness. Most likely, some, having heard of Peter's work of healing in the nearby town, sent two men entreating him to come to their town without delay. A delegation throughout Acts usually included 2 men.

### Lesson XIII continued

Verses 39-43.

Peter went with them. He was brought to the upper room where the body was. It had been washed according to Jewish tradition. Around the body were widows, showing the garments Dorcas had made for them. Peter sent all of them, mourners included, out of the room. This is what Jesus did in the raising of the daughter of Jairus. Peter's words were also similar - "Tabitha, arise." She opened her eyes and sat up. Peter then raised her up, upon her feet, and then presented her to her amazed friends. This miraculous event convinced many others of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as preached by Peter. He stayed there many days, a guest in the house of a tanner.

Acts 10:1-33. The Story of Cornelius.

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,  
 2 a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.  
 3 He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.  
 4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.  
 5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:  
 6 he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.  
 7 And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;  
 8 and when he had declared all these things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.  
 9 ¶ On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:  
 10 and he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,  
 11 and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:  
 12 wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.  
 13 And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.  
 14 But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.  
 15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.  
 16 This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.  
 17 ¶ Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,  
 18 and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter,

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were lodged there.

19 While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20 Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21 Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come?

22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23 Then called he them in, and lodged them.

¶ And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesare'a. And Cornelius waited for them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.

26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28 And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29 Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

30 ¶ And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31 and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32 Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33 Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

A call here is directed to a Roman soldier, a 100% Gentile. This erases all doubt that the Gospel is to be offered to all people. The city of Caesarea was mainly a Gentile city. Cornelius was a centurion, comparable to our Army Captain. They were qualified as good leaders, with a steady and firm mindset. No adventurous or hot-headed ones should apply. The one to deliver the message to him was to be none other than Peter himself.

Very special preparation was necessary to bring the two together, who would never have met otherwise. Each was given a vision. The question of how Gentiles were to be treated by Jewish Christians related to Jewish law and traditions. This had to be settled. Especially circumcised. These were the center of the debate

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at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15).

Verse 2.

Cornelius was known as a "God-fearer" and devout Gentile. Many Gentiles were attracted by the monotheism of the Jewish synagogue and the high ethical standards of Jewish law. On the other hand, they were not prepared to become full proselytes (converts). Some attended Synagogue, knew prayers and Scripture (read in Greek). Also observed Sabbath practices and abstaining from proscribed food. Cornelius was known for his regular prayer to the God of Israel and his many acts of charity to the less-fortunate Jews around him.

Later we will see many such "God-fearers" that become the nucleus of the Christian communities in the cities that Paul visits on his missionary journeys.

Verses 3-6.

One afternoon Cornelius is given a vision by an angel of the Lord. He was quickly assured that he need have no fear, for God has accepted his prayers and his charity. God now wanted to bless him in a very special way. This was to come from a man named Simon Peter, who was staying in Joppa with Simon a tanner, whose house was by the sea.

Verses 7,8.

Without delay he followed instructions, sending two servants and one of his soldiers to Joppa with directions to bring back this man, Peter.

Verses 9,10.

Peter must also be prepared for this uncommon meeting. The long-standing prejudices of Jews included not entering the "unclean" dwelling of a Gentile. The many ordinances concerning forbidden foods also would make fellowship awkward at best. A special vision was necessary to change Peter's thinking. The day after Cornelius' vision as his messengers were nearing Joppa. This was the time.

About noon, Peter went to the flat roof of the tanner's house for prayer. While there, he felt hungry, most likely calling down to those in the house for some food. As he waited, the vision took place. That it concerned food certainly would strike a very basic cord with him immediately.

Verses 11-13.

As a sheet, being pulled at the four corners, came down as from heaven. It contained all manner of animals, clean and unclean mammals, reptiles, birds. Then the voice, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."

Verses 14-16.

A lifetime of careful observance of the Law concerning proper Jewish diet was being canceled before his eyes. He could no so quickly change. Even clean animals had to be killed according to ritual propriety. Possibly thinking this was some kind of testing, Peter said, "Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is

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common or unclean." The reply, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." The voice repeated the message three times, then the vessel was taken up out of sight.

The lesson, though here specific to food, had a wider range of meaning that related to other Jewish ceremonial traditions that were to have no place in the Christian Church.

Perhaps he thought of Jesus' words in Mark 7:14 where He spoke about what defiles a man – not what goes into the stomach, but what comes out of his heart. Mark 7:19 - "This he said, making all meats clean." The vision now dramatically confirmed Christ's statement.

Verses 17-20.

Peter was still on the roof thinking about what had just occurred, and perplexed. The men from Cornelius had arrived, having been given directions to the tanner's house. They stood before the gate. They called out, asking if Peter was lodging there. The Holy Spirit interrupts Peter's thought and tells him three men are looking for him. He is to go down, and go with them, doubting nothing because they have been sent by the Spirit.

Verses 21-23a.

Peter went down (by the outdoor stairway) and met the messengers asking for him. He identifies himself and asks why they have come. They related the instructions divinely given to Cornelius to invite him to his home. He was to hear an important message from him. It being too late to begin the journey to Caesarea, Peter invited them to come in and spend the night there.

Verses 23b,24.

The day following they set out for Caesarea. Peter wisely took six fellow Christians with him (Acts 11:12). Meanwhile Cornelius had called together friends and family to be present when Peter got there.

Verses 25,26.

When Peter got there, Cornelius came out to greet him with great respect. He prostrated himself at Peter's feet. This obviously embarrassed Peter, who quickly told him to get up – for he was only a regular guy like Cornelius.

Verses 27-29.

As they walked into the house, Peter was talking and expressed surprise when there was a whole group of people waiting for his arrival. He proceeded to explain that under normal conditions, he as a Jew could not mix with Gentiles in any social situation, especially at a Gentile's home. But God has showed Him that from God's point of view no one is to be considered common or unclean. Obviously he wisely understood the lesson of the food laws as also including all other aspects of Jewish discrimination. He had come without hesitation and now he wished to know the specific reason he had been brought here.

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Verses 30-33.

Cornelius proceeds to describe the vision which he had seen three days ago, at this very time. The heavenly visitor in shining robes, spoke encouraging words, then directed him to send for Peter. Cornelius thanked Peter for so promptly coming. Now, all those he has asked to be there are expectantly ready to hear what the Lord has prepared Peter to say to them.

Next, Peter's Delivery of the Good News. Acts 10:34-43.

### Lesson XIV

The Acts of the Apostles 10:34-43.  
Peter Delivers the Good News.

34 ¶ Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:  
35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.  
36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)  
37 that word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;  
38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.  
39 And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:  
40 him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly;  
41 not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.  
42 And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.  
43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

Verses 34,35.

Peter has a clear understanding of God's message to him, and what God brought him here to say to this gathering. It was of the greatest importance. The words "Peter opened his mouth, and said" are to emphasize that the importance of his words must be carefully listened to.

He has learned that God is no respecter of persons. Nor of nations. He accepts those that "fear Him." This means firm belief and deep respect or awe. Also included is the evidence in a person's good works, coming from what is in their heart – the good fruit of righteousness.

These things would have been of great importance to Luke, who was most likely of Gentile birth.

Verses 36,37.

Peter's message assumes that his hearers have some familiarity with the basic facts of the public ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He summarizes the narrative. He begins by describing God sending Jesus Christ (Lord of all) to preach good tidings of peace unto the children of Israel. This began in Galilee, then throughout all Judea – after baptism by John.

Verse 38.

After that even, Jesus was "anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and with power." (Fulfilling Isaiah 61:1, which Jesus read in the synagogue at Nazareth – Luke 4:18.) Thereafter He fulfilled Isaiah 61 – going about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.



Lesson XIV continued

Verse 39.

Peter makes certain that his listeners know that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses of those things concerning Jesus that he speaks of. Also emphasized is the execution of Jesus by the cursed "hanging on a tree."

Verses 40,41.

The contrast between what men did to Jesus and what God did for Him is complete: The Holy One that men put to death, God raised to life eternal on the third day. He appeared to many witnesses, not the general unbelieving population, but to those selected by God. They saw and heard Him, but also ate and drank with Him. This was to certify that He was no phantom or ghost.

Verse 42.

The apostles were commanded by Jesus Christ to proclaim the Gospel. An important and final part was that He was appointed by God to be the Judge of the living and the dead (as prophesied in Daniel 7:13; John 5:27).

Verse 43.

The greatest message was and is forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus (Luke 24:47, Isaiah 53:11). This was the great message of the prophets throughout history.

Verses 44-48.

44 ¶ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.

45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

Verse 44.

Even while Peter was speaking, the Holy Spirit fell on all his audience. Apparently, belief in Peter's Gospel message had already taken place (as is reasonable).

Verses 45,46.

The believers that had come with Peter (of the circumcision - thereby meaning Jewish Christians) were amazed. The outpouring including public signs as at Pentecost - speaking with tongues (other languages) and praising God. This seems to have been necessary as auditory and visible proof of the reality of the Holy Spirit equally given to Gentiles.

Lesson XIV continued

Verses 47,48.

The Gentiles here received the gift of the Holy Spirit when they believed. There was only one thing left – to publicly complete their acceptance into the Church of Jesus Christ, through baptism. That Peter states the proposition in such a way that only a negative answer is expected or possible. Therefore, Peter commanded them to be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ. The newly converted asked him graciously to stay with them for a few days. They certainly needed some instruction in the way of life of their new faith. It must be noted that there was no mention of circumcision or other following of Jewish laws. This would be raised as a problem later at the Jerusalem council (chapter 15).

Acts 11:1-18. Peter Explains.

1 And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3 saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

4 But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, saying,

5 I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6 upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7 And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

8 But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9 But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

10 And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11 And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Caesare'a unto me.

12 And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

13 and he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14 who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16 Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us,

Lesson XIV continued

who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God?

18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Verses 1-3.

Obviously news traveled quickly in those days. The shocking behavior of Peter was voiced about before he returned to Jerusalem. No matter how many days elapsed before his return, the involvement of Gentiles was destined to cause serious controversy.

Somewhat later, in A.D. 41, Herod Agrippa I was appointed king of Judea by Claudius. He executed the apostle James and when he saw that it please the Jews, arrested Peter also. About the same time, James the brother of Jesus, comes to be the accepted leader of the church at Jerusalem instead of one of the original apostles (Acts 12:17, 15:13).

When Peter returned to Jerusalem, the Jewish Christians especially concerned about the Law of Moses took Peter to task for going against Jewish traditions that concerned social interaction with Gentiles. The Gentiles were uncircumcised and considered unclean. What business did Peter have with such people?

Verses 4-14.

The very best method for Peter to explain his actions was to tell them the details of the heavenly vision and what transpired afterward. He describes the vision on the roof of the tanner's house in Joppa. This includes the "great sheet" and he adds wild beasts not mentioned previously. His protest was voiced, then the repetition of the heavenly voice three times to rise and eat. By the time the vision was drawn up into haven, three men were out front inquiring for him, to take him to Caesarea. The Holy Spirit directed him to do so - "And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting."

The six believers that had gone to Caesarea with Peter were there and could verify what had taken place. Apparently the account of the angel's visit to Cornelius was already known, here briefly recounted - the point was that Peter was called to speak the Gospel message of salvation to him and his household. Cornelius was known as a God fearer, and for righteous works. But salvation was only by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Verses 15-17.

The other important part quickly followed - that the Holy Spirit came upon the new Gentile believers as it had the disciples at Pentecost. Peter then recalls the words of Jesus after His resurrection (Acts 1:5) - "John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence." That God made the Gentiles and believing Jews equal in salvation and the gift of the indwelling Spirit, so also must Peter accept God's leading and instruction.

Lesson XIV continued

Verse 19.

No one could counter this evidence and testimony. There were 6 additional witnesses (those believers that had accompanied Peter to Cornelius' house). Those present rightly responded with praise to God for the great and wonderful work He had done. We may assume that this group of disciples and the apostles accepted this occurrence more readily than those that came to be known as Judaizers who had serious reservations about Gentiles being accepted into the church without conditions (circumcision, obeying the Laws, concerning food etc.) As mentioned before, this issue would not be put to rest until later at the great Jerusalem Council.

Next, Antioch.

Lesson XV

## The Acts of the Apostles 11:19-30.

19 ¶ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phoeni'cia, and Cyprus, and An'ti-och, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20 And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyre'ne, which, when they were come to An'ti-och, spake unto the Gre'cians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22 Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as An'ti-och.

23 Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

24 For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

26 and when he had found him, he brought him unto An'ti-och. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in An'ti-och.

27 ¶ And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto An'ti-och.

28 And there stood up one of them named Ag'abus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea:

30 which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

## Verse 19.

Luke now goes back to the same time period as in Acts 8:4. The impetus was the persecution and scattting abroad that resulted from the violent death of Stephen. The most important activity they did was preaching the Gospel. Here he takes up the story of their progress geographically and the successes spreading the Gospel. Their travels continued northward along the coast, formerly Phoenician, then to Cyprus, and further to Antioch.

This city was known as a "free" city, and the seat of the municipal government of Syria. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city of the civilized world. Rome was first. Alexandria in Egypt was second. It also had a large Jewish population. It had a reputation for loose sexual morals, mainly because of the cults of Artemis and Apollo at Daphne, five miles from the city. These involved ritual prostitution.

## Verse 20.

Up to this point, the believers that fled Jerusalem, through Hellenists, limited their spreading of their faith to the Jewish communities in the places they went. Now in Antioch some brave souls made the decision to widen their horizons. Salvation was the greatest gift and blessing to Jews. No one had told them it would not be the

Lesson XV continued

same to everyone – all people were in the bondage to sin. They began to speak to the Greek population of Antioch about Jesus as Lord and Savior. They bypassed the Messianic aspects of His mission because non-Jews would have no knowledge of the references – which centered around the nation of Israel. There were various mystery cults that suggested secret ways to happiness and immortality. This was promised as what Jesus could do for them. These men were from Cyprus and Cyrene.

Verse 21.

A large number responded positively and accepted Jesus as Lord. It can be assumed that a number of these converts had been God-fearers, who were somewhat familiar with Old Testament prophecies, through synagogue attendance. The scale of this many converts among Gentiles was entirely new.

Verses 22-24.

Not surprisingly, the news traveled to Jerusalem. As before with Philip's mission in Samaria, now the Jerusalem leaders were to send a special delegation to Antioch to check out the situation. But who could they send that would be open and spiritually wise as well as not a biased Jewish Christian. The final choice was Barnabas, 'son of encouragement', born Jewish, but also from Cyprus.

Once there, what he saw made him rejoice because of God's grace, accepting both Jew and Gentile equally. As part of his mission, Barnabas was true to his name, giving all the encouragement he could to this burgeoning church. He exhorted them to persevere and remain faithful unto the Lord. His presence was strong in faith and full of the Holy Spirit. He did greatly encourage these believers. During the time he was there, the Gospel continued to spread and added a great number to their group.

Verses 25,26.

Apparently the very numbers were greater than Barnabas felt able to lead, teach, and organize alone. Who would be best for this particular situation? It had been several years since Saul of Tarsus had returned home, after his experience in Jerusalem. He would be the obvious choice. So he went to Tarsus and began looking for Saul. Apparently he had been rejected by his Jewish family and was on his own, though native to that city. Barnabas kept on until he found him.

They went back to Antioch and ministered there for an entire year. As converts were added, they were systematically taught the principles of Christian faith and practice. No major problems disrupted them. The new way of life and faith was more readily acceptable even among the great variety of backgrounds of Jews, Greeks, other Gentiles, races, and religions. This contrasted with the situation in Jerusalem.

The Greek form of Messiah is Christos. This name was voiced about so much in public in the city that the general public identified those who spoke this name as Christians, for the first time anywhere.

Lesson XV continued

Verses 27,28.

Prophets went from Jerusalem to Antioch. They had a specific mission. God, through the Spirit, had revealed a great famine was coming. This message was necessary so that provision could be made for those in greatest need. This took place during the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41-54), when a succession of bad harvests and serious famines occurred in several parts of the Roman Empire. There is some evidence that Luke was a native of Syrian Antioch. He may have been among these early converts.

Verses 29,30.

These disciples accepted this prophecy as absolute truth. They recognized the need the mother church in Jerusalem would have. Every man, according to their ability, set aside what they could to send relief to their brethren there. When the amount was gathered, they appointed Barnabas and Saul to take it to Jerusalem for them. This apparently happened around 46 A.D. A famine in Judea is recorded by Josephus at that date.

This is probably the visit mentioned by Paul in Galatians 2:1. In Galatians 2:2, Paul records an interview with the leaders of the Jerusalem church – Peter, John, and James (brother of Jesus). They sought acceptance as apostles to the Gentiles.

Acts 12:1-12. Herod Agrippa I and the Church. Peter in Prison & His Escape.

1 Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church.

2 And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

3 And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)

4 And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

6 ¶ And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

7 And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands.

8 And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.

9 And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

10 When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.

11 And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out

### Lesson XV continued

of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.

12 ¶ And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.

#### Verse 1.

This Herod was a grandson of Herod the Great. He was born in 11 B.C., brought up in Rome, on friendly terms with Gaius, grand-nephew of Emperor Tiberius. He succeeded Tiberius in 37 A.D. He gave Agrippa the tetrarchy of southern Syria, and the title of king. Two years later, Galilee and Peraea were added to the kingdom. Later still, in 41 A.D., Claudius added Judea. He set out to win and retain the good will of the Jews. The Herod dynasty had alienated the general population for many years.

Though the apostles had not been targets of the original persecution following Stephen's death, apparently at this time, the attitude of the people of Jerusalem had changed toward them. This appears to be the reason that Agrippa chose to attack this new religious aberration that upset those in power among the Jewish leaders. This included the religious leaders (Pharisees, Sadducees) the civil leaders (elders, Sanhedrin).

#### Verse 2.

His first victim was James, brother of John, both sons of Zebedee, who was executed. He was the first apostle to be martyred. This fulfilled what Jesus had told them both in Mark 10:39 - that they would drink from His cup and be baptized with His baptism. John, though suffering for the Gospel, outlived all the other apostles (Revelation 1:9).

#### Verse 3.

That this pleased the Jews may directly relate to the spreading news about Peter's highly unorthodox visit and preaching to Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. Even Jewish Christians had difficulty accepting this new outreach. Imagine how much more the Jewish leaders would be outraged. Jewish Christians were generally tolerated for about 20 more years. When Agrippa observed the popular reaction to James' death was that of approval, he saw the path to continue. He sought to increase the approval by imprisoning the leader of the apostles, Peter, who also had been the one to involve Gentiles - the unclean, heathens.

#### Verse 4.

Peter was arrested as the days of unleavened bread were beginning, but no trial or execution was permitted during the festival period. He must be imprisoned with many precautions until then. Any attempt to free him must be adequately prevented. Four soldiers in four shifts. One on either side of Peter, and two at the cell door.

#### Verses 5-9.

At the same time, continual prayers were being offered for



Lesson XV continued

Peter, by the Jerusalem believers. The night before the trial, God chose to answer their prayer for his release.

Obviously, Peter was soundly asleep between the two guards, they asleep also. It took a strong nudge (or blow) on his side and a voice that told him to get up quickly. The chains that held him to the soldiers simply dropped from his hands, as he got up. The cell had enough light now so that he could gather up his garments to tie on his sandals and wrap his outer garment (cloak) around himself and fellow the angelic being. So unbelievable was this occurrence that he imagined that he was in fact dreaming the whole thing and that if he woke up he would still be in the dark cell chained to the two soldiers.

The 'dream' continued through one gate, then another, both with guards. Then they reached the outer gate, which automatically opened and they were in the open street. Peter realized that he hadn't awakened as he thought he would.

Verses 10,11.

The angel left him, and there he was alone. As long as he was following the angel he thought he was still in a dream. Once alone, still, in the middle of a street, he "came to himself". He realized that only God engineered this miraculous, supernatural intervention to rescue him from the fate Herod had planned for him. The Jews were also looking forward to his trial and execution.

Verse 12.

Peter first wanted the believers to know that he had been supernaturally released. After that he must find a much safer place to hide out, for certainly Herod would search for him. Apparently, one chief meeting place was the home of Mary, Mark's mother.

This is the first certain mention and identification of Mark who was to play an important role with Peter for over 30 years. According to church tradition, he was Peter's interpreter in Rome, and recorded Peter's message in the Gospel, bearing his name. Later he went to Egypt and founded the church in Alexandria. He also may have been Luke's source of this and other events in Acts.

Next, Peter at the Door.

## Lesson XVI

The Acts of the Apostles 12:13-19. Peter at the Door.

13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.

14 And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.

15 And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.

16 But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished.

17 But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.

18 ¶ Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.

19 And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesare'a, and there abode.

Verse 13.

When Peter arrived at the house of Mary, mother of Mark, he knocked at the door of the gate. A maid named Rhoda came to answer.

Verses 14,15.

She knew Peter well enough to recognize his voice through the door. She was obviously young and highly excitable. Upon recognizing his voice she became so excited that she had to run and tell everyone the exciting news, thus leaving Peter still outside the door of the gate. Her report, the best possible news, the very answer to all of their prayers, seems too good to be true – thus is not believed. Either the maid is just wrong, or possibly she has misread the voice, and it is Peter's guardian angel she heard. This was a superstition that a guardian angel could appear like the human he protected.

Verse 16.

All this time, Peter is still knocking – not too loudly, but insistently.

Verse 17.

When they finally came and let him in, he described his miraculous release and told them to spread the news to James and the other believers. He then had to go to an undisclosed location, knowing that he would be looked for in any obvious place. No one to this day knows or has found out where he went.

Apparently from the middle 40's A.D., Peter and the other apostles were more and more away from Jerusalem. James, the Lord's brother, stayed. He was the well-respected leader of the church there. Even the general population of the city revered him because of his carefully righteous life, which included regular temple attendance and prayer services, interceding for the people. In 61 A.D., he was executed by the religious leaders, taking advantage of there not being a Roman authority in the city.

Lesson XVI continued

Festus the procurator had died and his successor had not yet been put in place. Some later believed that James' death helped bring on the city's destruction not long after (70 A.D.).

Verses 18,19.

In the morning, there was much disturbing excitement when Peter was sought and not found, and no one knew what had happened to him. The soldiers on duty were questioned and no acceptable answer was found. They were held accountable, and put to death because they failed their commission to guard him. No doubt Agrippa thought they were bribed, a plot brought to pass. No other actions were seen as possible, so the king left Jerusalem, with some degree of disappointment. Needing distraction, he went to the more pleasant and less controversial environment of Caesarea.

Acts 12:20-23. Agrippa I Dies.

20 ¶ And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country.

21 And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22 And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.

23 And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

Verse 20.

It was not long after Agrippa arrived at Caesarea that he died. The cities of Tyre and Sidon got their food supplies from Galilee, which Agrippa ruled. For some undisclosed reason he was displeased with the people of these two cities. They wished to gain his favor, so they made Blastus their friend. He was Agrippa's chamberlain. They had an opportunity to have an audience with the king. Their plan was to make a public peace offering with him.

Verses 21-23.

Josephus also recorded this event: Agrippa has a spectacle produced to honor Caesar, setting up a festival for the emperor. All the nearby officials and important people came. On sunrise of the second day, Agrippa entered the theater in a silver robe. The resulting reflection was amazing to the onlookers. They proceeded to make great flattery to him by addressing him as some divine personage, and asking for his divine favor. They now recognize him as no longer a mere man, but a god. He accepted their adulation and impious flattery.

He was seized by severe pain in his belly and was carried away. Five days later he died. He was 54 years old, and in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his reign. Luke stressed that it was his acceptance of the crowd's blasphemous adulation brought on divine judgment. Then "eaten of worms" brought about his death, most unpleasant. The government again reverted to procurators.

Lesson XVI continued

Verses 24,25. End of the Chapter.

24 ¶ But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25 ¶ And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Verse 24.

The Gospel continued to prosper, in adding believers to the church. This dramatically contrasts with the end of Agrippa's reign.

Verse 25.

It is reasonable that Barnabas and Paul didn't go to Jerusalem until after Agrippa's death. Luke follows the custom of ancient historians of narrating one source's story to its suitable ending before relating the narrative of other actors. It is therefore likely, since Agrippa died in 44 A.D., that they went to Jerusalem with the famine relief donation in 46 A.D. When they completed that task, they took Mark with them. He was Barnabas' cousin (Colossians 4:10). It seems likely that they were guests of Mark's mother while in Jerusalem.

Acts 13:1-12.

1 Now there were in the church that was at An'ti-och certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyre'ne, and Man'a-en, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 ¶ So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleu'cia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

5 And when they were at Sal'amis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister.

6 And when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus:

7 which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God.

8 But El'ymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.

9 Then Saul, (who also is called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him,

10 and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?

11 And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand.

Lesson XVI continued

12 Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.

Verse 1.

In the Antioch Church there were God-called prophets and teachers. Three are named here. Symeon – called Niger. We can only assume that he was of dark complexion. Some have proposed that he may have been the "Simon of Cyrene who carried Christ's cross", and the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Lucius is the one here identified as from Cyrene. Lucius was a very common name at the time. Nothing further is known. It can be assumed that he was among those also from Cyprus who first preached the Gospel to Gentiles in Antioch. The third, Manaen, is the Greek form of the Hebrew Menahem (meaning "comforter"). Foster brother was the term used to identify boys brought up at court, with royal princes. This Herod was Antipas, who ruled Galilee and Perea as tetrarch from 4 B.C. To 39 A.D.

Verse 2.

As these prophets and teachers were busy about their working among the believers, the Holy Spirit made known the mission to set these two apart. Exactly who is not mentioned – the important thing was its communication. Barnabas and Saul were to be set apart for special work. There was no question of their eminent qualifications for this mission.

Verse 3.

After more fasting and prayer, the two were commissioned for this new mission and released from their local responsibilities. The brethren laid hands on them, praying for blessing and success in their new work. This expressed the closest fellowship and good will to these delegates or "apostles" with the entire church.

Verse 4.

They began by traveling to Seleucia – then sailed to Cyprus. Seleucia was the nearest port of Antioch. Cyprus was an important island, annexed by Rome in 57 B.C.; it became a separate province in 27 B.C. The chief administrator was a proconsul.

Verses 5-8.

Once on the island they traveled from the east to the west, proclaiming the Gospel. John Mark was their attendant. The first place was Salamis, a Greek city on the coast. It was a busy commercial center. More than one synagogue. It was here to the Jews first, they told the Gospel story. This was their established procedure. Those who already were "God-fearers" were earnest hearers of God's good news. They continued west until they arrived at the seat of the provincial government, Paphos.

They were called to an audience with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. Also present was a known sorcerer called Bar-Jesus. This man interfered with Barnabas and Paul as they began speaking God's message. This sorcerer tried his best to distract the proconsul from listening and considering the new message from God. It threatened his role at court – he would be obsolete.

Lesson XVI continued

The Greek word for sorcerer is "magos". Originally named the "magi" in Media as a priestly caste, later the word was used to cover every kind of magician or false spiritual activity (psychics, soothsayers). This man claimed (falsely) to speak revelation from God. The name Elymas is most likely a Semitic word meaning sorcerer.

Verses 9-11.

He was strongly rebuked by Saul (his Hebrew name). Here for the first time in Acts he is called by his Latin name: Paul. After this he is continually called thusly. Though the name "Bar-Jesus" suggests "son of Jesus" it is a lie to hide his actual affiliation with satan. Judgment comes upon him, proven by his temporary blindness. He immediately started fumbling around, asking for someone to help him, to guide his steps.

Verse 12.

The proconsul was impressed by this sudden change in the man's condition, and "believed". This was confirmation of the Gospel message he had just carefully listened to. Church tradition suggests that in the next two generations, some members of his family were known as Christians.

Next, Pisidian Antioch.

Lesson XVII

The Acts of the Apostles 13:13-52. Pisidian Antioch.

13 ¶ Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphyl'i-a: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.

14 But when they departed from Perga, they came to An'ti-och in Pisid'i-a, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down.

15 And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them, saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.

16 Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, ¶ Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience.

17 The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with a high arm brought he them out of it.

18 And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

19 And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he divided their land to them by lot.

20 And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

21 And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years.

22 And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will.

23 Of this man's seed hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

24 when John had first preached before his coming the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 And as John fulfilled his course, he said, Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.

26 ¶ Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent.

27 For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him.

28 And though they found no cause of death in him, yet desired they Pilate that he should be slain.

29 And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

30 But God raised him from the dead:

31 and he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people.

32 And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers,

33 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second

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psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.

34 And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

35 Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

36 For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption:

37 but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

38 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:

39 and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

40 Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets;

41 Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.

42 ¶ And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

43 Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 ¶ And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

48 ¶ And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

50 But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women, and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their coasts.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet against them, and came unto Ico'ni-um.

52 And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.

### Verse 13.

Now having traversed Cyprus with the Gospel Message, Paul and Barnabas and others left from Paphos and sailed across to the southern coast of Asia Minor. They landed at Attalia, and then most likely traveled the 12 miles inland to Perga, in the coastal district of Pamphylia. On the north was the Taurus range of mountains on the



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west Licia, on the east Cilicia, on the south, the Mediterranean.

John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. No reason is mentioned. Paul later (15:38) called it desertion. Paul also seems to have taken over as leader. Barnabas is not mentioned here.

Verses 14,15.

The group continued north across the Taurus range, entering the southern area of the Roman province of Galatia. Another city called Antioch was there, near the border of Pisidia, another region in that province. It was Pisidian Antioch by name as distinct from the other Antioch. It was a civil and military center, and 3600 feet above sea level. Augustus made it a Roman colony. They were strategic points along the major Roman system of roads.

There was a Jewish community and synagogue. On the first Sabbath they were there, the two missionaries went. After the traditional prayers and reading of Scripture, the rulers of the synagogue asked if these two strangers had words of encouragement for those gathered.

Verse 16.

Paul responded to the invitation by going to the pulpit, turning to the congregation and making a hand gesture to get their attention. He then began his address. He addresses two groups: Men of Israel and ye that fear God. The latter being Gentiles, God-fearers. The former: Jews by birth or conversion. This is one of the two descriptions of a synagogue service in the New Testament. The other is in Luke 4:16 when Jesus preached in Nazareth. As time proved, the Gentiles present wherever Paul preached were more receptive to the Good News.

Verses 17-22.

His exhortation begins by the lesson of history of God's dealing with the people of Israel. Stephen's preaching was similar. God's call to the patriarchs, the exodus from Egypt, the kingship of David, then the promised Redeemer, of David's lineage. These words narrate God's redeeming actions for Israel - that all Jews would know by heart. This provided the Old Testament line of God's salvation which the New Testament would complete. The Old Testament events lead naturally and sequentially to the outworking of Christ's coming, ministry, and sacrificial death, and resurrection.

Verse 23.

Ezekiel 21:27 promises the coming ruler would be a new and greater David, the Messiah of the God of Israel. Paul identifies the promised One as Jesus.

Verses 24,25.

He begins the Gospel story with the ministry of John the Baptist, calling the people to repentance and baptism. He paved the way for Jesus' appearance in public, and acknowledged Him as the "Lamb of God" who had come to take away the sins of the people. John specifically told the public that he himself was not the One they waited for. He declared himself unworthy to even loose His sandals.

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Verses 26-29.

Calling them brethren, he repeats the identification of the two groups of his audience: Jews and God-fearers. The Gospel of Salvation is sent directly to them. He continues the narrative. The religious leaders are accounted guilty of not knowing or understanding the prophetic Scriptures they foretold. They passed the death sentence upon Him at the same time, fulfilling those prophecies that described how he must suffer and die. They went to the procurator Pilate, demanding this innocent man's death. He carried it out by crucifixion – on a "tree" (as Deuteronomy 21:23) as accursed. Once dead, He was taken down and entombed.

Verses 30,31.

God raised Him up the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. The joy of triumph must have been in Paul's voice as he recites this with the appearances to His disciples. And they were personally and publicly witnessing to His Resurrection.

Verses 32,33.

Psalms 2:7 is quoted - "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." The very words of the heavenly voice at the baptism of John as related in Luke 3:22.

Verses 34-37.

Also, the prophecy of Isaiah 55:3 requires the resurrection as one of the promises of David concerning the Messiah. Also included Psalm 16:10 as Peter had quoted - "Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption." Obviously not happening to David – he died and was buried and "saw corruption."

Verses 38,39.

All leads to the connection with a direct application to the audience. They are offered the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God through the sacrifice of Christ. They must decide, repent, and believe. Trying to fulfill the law of Moses was not humanly possible and led to no one's salvation.

Verses 40,41.

He closes his address with a serious warning. He quotes the prophet Habakkuk from his warning about the coming action of Nebuchadnezzar to become world ruler. The prophet describes the reaction of the nations – astonishment, disbelief. It echoes the warning of Isaiah in the time of the Assyrian Empire's rise (Isaiah 28:21; 29:14). Paul is stressing the greater peril of those who reject the Gospel of Christ.

Verses 42,43.

So much interest was generated by Paul's exposition that many in the audience requested they return and expound further. Even many Jews and those converting to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, as they were so attracted by their message. The two encouraged them to continue to contemplate the great mercy of God in the Gospel.

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Verses 44,45.

The news was spread throughout the city the following week. The next Sabbath, an exceptionally large amount of the general Gentile population showed up at the synagogue. The regular Jewish congregation was not happy to see so many outsiders (Gentiles) in their regular meeting place. So also, they were not pleased with the reason - they had come to hear this new doctrine. No doubt the leaders and the old fashioned Jews were not so accepting of this new "salvation" that so easily included Gentiles. They then spoke against the things said by Paul - including words blaspheming the Name of Jesus as Messiah.

Verse 46.

The obvious explanation centers around the purpose of the nation of Israel as the Holy Nation representing God in the world. Therefore, they would receive God's new Gospel first and then again be God's messengers of the new Gospel to the world. They would not accept that role - they would be bypassed and the Gospel would go directly to the Gentiles. Only a minority of Jews in these local synagogues became believers. The God-fearing Gentiles in these synagogues accepted the Gospel in greater numbers and became the nucleus of the churches Paul founded. Then the Gospel would be offered directly to Gentiles in the general population.

Unfortunately, this also caused great hostility against Paul. He encroached upon their territory, pulled away their members. Paul saw their rejection as their greatest loss of opportunity to be a part of the spread of the Good News of Jesus.

Verse 47.

The proof was in Isaiah 49:6 which is quoted here by Paul and Barnabas. In verse 3, Israel is first named as God's servant, in which He will be glorified. Only Jesus the Messiah could actually fulfill this prophecy. Israel as a whole had been and continued to be disobedient to God's call and commandments. He therefore became the light to the whole world - "A light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (quoted in Luke 2:29-32). This salvation was to be spread unto the ends of the earth.

Verses 48,49.

This message was greeted with great joy by the Gentiles, "and as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed." Those that believed then carried the message to the surrounding region.

Verse 50.

The leading Jews of the city chose to use their influence into getting rid of these two troublemakers. Two groups were used - the devout and important women were influenced to get their husbands to realize the danger of allowing these troublemakers to remain in the city. It worked and they were induced to leave.

Verses 51,52.

The two did the traditional reaction to rejection of their message. This gesture was the same one that Jesus told His disciples

Lesson XVII continued

when rejected (Luke 9:5): "Shake the dust of their feet off," as being heathen territory. This may have been more directed against the local Jews than the civic hierarchy. They traveled to Iconium. This was eastward. Those left behind were filled with the joy of their salvation, and the Holy Spirit.

Next, Further Persecution.

### Lesson XVIII

The Acts of the Apostles 14:1-7. Further Persecution.

1 And it came to pass in Ico'ni-um, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.  
 2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren.  
 3 Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.  
 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: and part held with the Jews, and part with the apostles.  
 5 And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles, and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully, and to stone them,  
 6 they were ware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lyca-o'nia, and unto the region that lieth round about:  
 7 and there they preached the gospel.

After having been forced to leave Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas "shaking the dust from their feet," headed east into the Roman province of Galatia. The eastern most city was Iconium.

#### Verse 1.

As was their custom, they first went to the Jewish synagogue. They were allowed to speak, and the result was immediate. "...a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed."

#### Verse 2.

Those that "were disobedient" not only rejected the Gospel, but also actively made it their business to turn the people, the general public (described as all Gentiles) and included members of the local government (verse 5 - "with their rulers"), "against the brethren."

#### Verse 3.

As the opposition continued to grow, the two also continued to boldly preach the Word. Along with their life changing message of God's grace, there were "signs and wonders to be done by their hands." This showed the greatest proof of their Gospel being from God, with approval and power.

In Galatians 3:5, Paul mentions the mighty works, that what they had seen was proof of their message being truth - which the preaching of the Law did not. His message was the opposite - God's grace.

#### Verse 4.

The longer they preached, the more members of the local population chose one side or the other. Finally, the Jewish leaders agitated those that sided with them.

#### Verse 5.

A mob was formed with the Jewish leaders, and Gentiles, to riot, en masse, seeking the apostles and to kill them by stoning.

### Lesson XVIII continued

Verses 6,7.

They were informed of this mob and their plan, in time for them to leave. They went to other cities and any other opportunity to preach the Gospel in the more eastern area of that region known as Lycaonia, two of the cities: Lystra and Derba.

In a book written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century called Acts of Paul, a man from Iconium named Onesiphorus went to meet Paul on his way to that city. He writes the following description:

"And he saw Paul approaching, a man small in size, with meeting eyebrows, a rather large nose, bald-headed, bow-legged, strongly built, full of grace, for at times he looked like a man, and at times he had the face of an angel."

Verses 8-18. The Miracle at Lystra.

8 ¶ And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb, who never had walked:

9 the same heard Paul speak: who steadfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed,

10 said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lyca-o'nia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.

12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercu'ri-us, because he was the chief speaker.

13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.

14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

15 and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein:

16 who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways.

17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

Verse 8.

The description of this healing is similar to the one in Acts chapter 3, by the word of Peter that brought faith in the Name of Jesus. But what happens after the healing is dramatically different. This man was known to have been a cripple since his birth and was known to never have walked.

Verses 9,10.

As Paul spoke to the gathering, he noticed this man gazing intently at him. Paul perceived faith: faith to be made whole. By

Lesson XVIII continued

faith he was spiritually healed and in this case led to his physical healing. Immediately, upon Paul's command to stand upright on his feet, he did so. He jumped up for the first time in his life and walked.

Verses 11,12.

The crowd, pagan Gentiles, were amazed. Apparently this was the native population of this region, who spoke in their ancient Lycaonian language. Their reaction looked back to belief of mythological gods who on occasion would come down to earth "in the likeness of men." They had taken the newer names from the Roman pantheon - Jupiter - as Barnabas, Mercury as Paul - the messenger speaker. The Greek being Zeus and Hermes.

Verse 13.

There was a temple here to Jupiter. The priest led the crowd to prepare a sacrifice to honor these two visitors.

Verse 14.

Word finally reached Paul and Barnabas. They were shocked, tearing their clothes, "sprang forth." They acted quickly to go out to the crowd to quickly convince them of their grave error. They had to show their own humanity - they are the same as everyone else. They are messengers of good news. They must turn from their false belief in "vain things", idols, the worthless mythologies. They represent the living God Who created all things.

Verses 15-17.

Here, they did not retell Old Testament prophecies concerning the promised Messiah fulfilled by Jesus as they typically did to primarily Jewish audiences. Instead, they now (and later in Acts 17:22) speak to purely pagans. Here and more fully in Acts 7 they call their attention to the natural revelation of the one Creator God. The Jews already accepted the unity and character of God the Almighty.

The pagans are told of the one God - Who left witness of His works of creation, and providence. He is the One Who supplies the needs of men without discrimination. Their pagan gods are false - utter vanities - empty and pointless. The emphasis here is on the continual and beneficial ordering of the seasons, providing food for all flesh. These should have drawn conclusions concerning God's everlasting power and divinity.

The other point - in the past, God overlooked their errors because of their ignorance of His will. But now the full revelation of His providing a way of salvation through Christ has been fulfilled. What patience forgave. Now they are responsible to make a decision.

Verse 18.

Their reasoning dissuades the crowd from going ahead with their sacrifice, but not by much.

Lesson XVIII continued

Verses 19-28. Persecution at Lystra. Travel to Derbe, then Return to the Southern Antioch.

19 ¶ And there came thither certain Jews from An'ti-och and Ico'ni-um, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.

20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Ico'ni-um, and An'ti-och, 22 confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

24 ¶ And after they had passed throughout Pisid'i-a, they came to Pamphyl'i-a.

25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attali'a:

26 and thence sailed to An'ti-och, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled.

27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.

#### Verse 19.

Though not mentioned, there probably was a Jewish community here. This more easily explains why the Jews coming from Antioch and Iconium had a ready audience. It seems that even those who had prepared to sacrifice to the two missionaries were easily convinced that they were now worthy of a public death sentence and execution by stoning. Paul was found first and stoned. When they thought he was dead, they dragged him out of the city.

#### Verse 20.

The disciples gathered around the body. To their surprise, he got up. Certainly he was taken to someone's home and cared for. The next day, he went with Barnabas to the next city, Derbe.

Paul would later write about this event (II Corinthians 11:25). In Galatians 6:17, he mentions carrying the scars from this stoning.

#### Verse 21.

They preached the Gospel and founded a church in Derbe, then went back to each of the cities they had evangelized. This in spite of their brutal treatment, so recently. Certainly they visited only among the believers, cautiously out of the public eye.

#### Verses 22,23.

In these recently formed churches, they spent their time firming up their understanding and faith in their new way of life, based on



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the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They also selected and appointed elders. They would be true spiritual guides and give further instruction and encouragement.

It is repeatedly mentioned that they were to expect and be prepared for tribulation from the world. In those times and places this was always to be expected. To be true to Christ and remain faithful, we follow His example. Paul counted it a blessing to suffer for the One that died for him. So also should all believers be dedicated to stand for their Savior. After prayer and fasting they left the church in the Lord's care.

Verses 24-26.

From Pisidian Antioch they traveled south out of the province of Galatia and into the province of Pamphylia. They preached in Perga, their first stop on arriving in Asia Minor from Cyprus (13:13). They went down to the port of Attalia. From there they took a boat, sailing back to their point of departure – the southern Antioch (Syrian).

Verses 27,28.

The church was gathered together to hear the whole story of their mission in Gentile territory. These believers had commissioned them with close fellowship and prayers to set forth. Now, about a year had passed. The two evangelists would spend about a year with the Antioch church.

The two narrated the great successes of the grace of God that had opened the door of salvation so wide to include the Gentiles. This was to change the balance of Jews and Gentiles in the Church. This would be of great concern to the church of Jerusalem and would lead to a showdown with those representing the Gentiles – namely Paul vs Peter.

Next, Chapter 15. The Council at Jerusalem.

Lesson XIX

The Acts of the Apostles 15:1-29. The Council of Jerusalem.

1 And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren.

4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.

5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

6 ¶ And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.

7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.

8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;

9 and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.

12 ¶ Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:

14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

15 And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,

16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

17 that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.

18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:

20 but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

21 For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him,

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being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

Intro. The newest influx of so many Gentile Christians into the beginning Church. The Jewish Christians feared that these former pagans would not live up to the Jewish (now Christian) moral standards. They faced many negative influences from their idolatrous and loosely moral cultures.

Paul's letters to the Corinthians confirms various problems that are examples of just such influences. Since so many Jews had rejected Christ, the Jerusalem church was willing to admit Gentiles to their fellowship to increase church members. Certainly Peter's experience had been accepted (with Cornelius). But they also felt that it must be part of their acceptance to become proselyte first - to be circumcised and begin following the Law of Moses. To the majority of these Jews, Christianity was the fulfillment of the traditional promises, prophecies, and hope of the Old Testament. The situation had now changed. The Council of Jerusalem was called to settle the issue.

Verses 1-5.

Some concerned Jewish Christians decided to carry their message to the growing church in Antioch. They acted as if they officially represented the leaders of the Jerusalem Church, which included the apostles and elders. They taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, describes this event in detail. These men were also saying that there could not be any fellowship with Gentile Christians.

Other Judaizers would also go to the young churches of Southern Galatia. Paul's Galatian letter insisted that the believers reject this burdensome attempt to add Jewish "works" to the simple Gospel message of God's provision of salvation as grace, the gift, paid for by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

Verse 2.

It was readily recognized that this issue would continue to split the churches, not only the Gentile from the Jewish but among them all. This must be openly discussed and reasonably, and decide the true way that God intended. The Antioch Church chose Paul and Barnabas, among others, to speak for them to the leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Verse 3.

The delegates passed through Phoenicia and Samaria on their way. They visited the churches there (also mainly Gentile believers). They shared the successes of their missionary trip with them. These believers also rejoiced over the Gospel being spread among the Gentiles

Verse 4.

Once in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas appeared before the apostles and elders and presented what God had brought to pass through them among the Gentiles.

Lesson XIX continued

## Verse 5.

The group of Pharisees among them had accepted Christ as Lord and Messiah, because they believed in resurrection (contrasting with the Sadducees who didn't). They, however, remained legalists at heart, and insisted the Gentile converts must be circumcised and obey the Mosaic law.

## Verses 6-11.

The Jerusalem church then met to consider this issue. Not only the leaders from both sides, but also a multitude of the other members were present.

## Verses 7-9.

Peter, leader of the twelve apostles, stood up to speak. He recounts his experience with Cornelius, now nearly ten years ago. He recounts God's actions in calling and sending him to this Gentile to his family to speak the Gospel message. God also proved His acceptance of these new believers by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them. It was the same as the Pentecost experience for Jewish believers. God did this before even the Gentiles present spoke of their faith. God read their hearts and gave them the Holy Spirit upon their belief. Peter explains that God plainly shows their equality with Jewish believers. Since God accepted them as believers, the church had no right to add any conditions at all for their salvation or church membership.

## Verse 10.

Peter goes further, describing the yoke of the law, which his generation, as well as those that had gone before, were unable to bear. By Christ's time, there was the Mosaic Law, and the added traditional laws which were taught and insisted upon by the teachers of the Law – the rabbis, and the Pharisees. No one could carry it out even enough to find true peace of conscience. Jesus had often pointed this out – showing His yoke was easy to bear. Salvation was by free grace through Christ. How could they now demand something more for the Gentiles to be saved?

## Verses 12-21.

The multitude was quiet. Paul and Barnabas retold the works God had done among the Gentiles through their ministry. The works of God with Cornelius had been repeated a multitude of times in Antioch and the other cities and regions of Cyprus and Asia Minor.

## Verses 13-15.

It appears that by this time, James had become leader of the elders of the Jerusalem church. He was counted on to speak on this matter. When Paul and Barnabas finished speaking, James stood up, calling the brethren to listen to him. He describes Simon (Peter) recounting God's dealing with Gentile believers. He does not add any of Paul and Barnabas' testimony, possibly because it was still controversial among Jewish believers.

God was to display His grace and glory through Gentiles as well as Jews – thus, by extension to the whole world (all nations).

Lesson XIX continued

Verses 16-18.

Then he calls their attention to the prophecy of Amos (9:11). The central message is that the royal house of David will be restored, including the Temple (the tabernacle of David). James suggests that this was fulfilled by the resurrection and exaltation in heaven of the Son of David, Jesus Christ. His disciples become the New Israel. The second part of the fulfillment included believing Gentiles as well as Jews. "The Gentiles, upon whom my name is called."

Verses 19-21.

James stands for the fundamental principle of the Gospel - free grace, to be received by faith in Christ alone. No other obligations must be dictated. This included terms of church fellowship, except two concessions - Gentiles are asked to have consideration of their "weaker brethren" who had been brought up under the very strict Jewish laws. First concession - avoid meat that is still bloody, or that has idolatrous rites or associations. The second concession - respect the higher Jewish moral codes concerning relations between the sexes. This contrasted with the low standards of pagans. Put simply - no idolatry, no fornication, no murder.

The synagogues in the various Gentile areas would continue to teach the Mosaic Law for any who desired to be God-fearers. This may have given some reassurance to the Pharisees.

Verses 22-29. Messengers & A Letter for the Gentile Churches.

22 ¶ Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to An'ti-och with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren:

23 and they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in An'ti-och and Syria and Cili'cia:

24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment:

25 it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth.

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;

29 that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.

Verse 22.

James' proposal was accepted by those present as a whole.

Lesson XIX continued

Paul, later in his epistles, advises Christians who are strong in faith, that they should voluntarily hold in their freedom in food and other things. This is so that they would not offend weaker brethren (Romans 14:1; I Corinthians 8:17).

The Jerusalem leaders chose two of their members to go to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas to certify the council's findings on the controversy. Only Silas is mentioned as a traveling companion of Paul.

Verse 23.

In addition to these two witnesses who were to verbally relate the decisions, a letter was drawn up to be carried with them. It was addressed from the apostles and elder brethren, and to the Gentile Christians of Antioch and the province of Syro-Cilicia. By extension, so also any further churches among the Gentiles.

Verses 24-27.

The past disputes caused by Jewish believers that visited Antioch were not acceptable – they did not represent the Jerusalem church. Those they sent now were chosen, officially. The brethren Paul and Barnabas are described as "beloved" and commended for even risking their lives in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Verses 28,29.

The Holy Spirit is acknowledged as the Church's author and guide throughout these decisions. These decisions are retold – sending the two witnesses, and the necessary things of abstaining from idol sacrifices, blood (things strangled), and fornication. These simple requests are the only ones – and satisfactory for good relations with all believers – Jew and Gentile alike. The message closes with a desire for their welfare.

Next, the letter delivered.

Lesson XX

The Acts of the Apostles 15:30-41. The Letter Delivered.

30 ¶ So when they were dismissed, they came to An'ti-och: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle:  
 31 which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.  
 32 And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.  
 33 And after they had tarried there a space, they were let go in peace from the brethren unto the apostles.  
 34 Notwithstanding it pleased Silas to abide there still.  
 35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in An'ti-och, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.  
 36 ¶ And some days after, Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.  
 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark.  
 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphyl'i-a, and went not with them to the work.  
 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;  
 40 and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God.  
 41 And he went through Syria and Cili'cia, confirming the churches.

Verses 30-35.

When the emissaries got to Antioch, the church members were called together. The epistle was read. It was accepted and a cause for rejoicing. It was a great relief. It was also encouraging. Judas and Silas, described as also being prophets, stayed for a period of time, and "exhorted the brethren with many words..." Then they were dismissed in peace to return to their home church in Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching, among many others.

Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Tour Begins.

Verses 36-39.

Some time later, Paul felt it was time to re-visit the other Gentile churches they had planted, to see how they were doing. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. Paul disagrees because John Mark had left them on their previous missionary trip to Pamphylia.

Luke relates this rift in a simple, straight-forward way – not judging either Paul or Barnabas' motives. But neither one would change their minds – a sharp contention led them to part company from then on. Barnabas took John Mark and sailed to Cyprus.

Paul obviously felt the young man had deserted them previously without cause, and therefore didn't want to take a chance that it could happen again. Barnabas wanted to give him another chance. Paul would later accept him (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 23; Timothy 4:11) as his companion.

Lesson XX continued

God now had two missionary expeditions instead of just one. Barnabas returned to continue evangelizing his native home of Cyprus. Paul returned to his native Anatolia, also spreading the Gospel.

Verses 40,41.

Paul had apparently been impressed by earlier experiences with Silas, in Jerusalem, and as emissary to the church at Antioch. It would be advantageous to have a well-respected member of the Jerusalem church with him. We later learn (16:37) that he was a Roman citizen as well as Paul. Once Silas arrived back in Antioch the church commended afresh their enterprise, as they had on the former occasion. They set off through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches. Certainly they would also share the pronouncements of the Jerusalem council. Silas would be a strong witness since he had the previous role of carrying the message to the church at Antioch.

Acts 16:1-5.

1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek:

2 which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Ico'ni-um.

3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek.

4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.

5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Verses 1,2.

Once through Cilicia, Paul and Silas passed through the Taurus Mt. Range by the pass called the Cilician Gate, and into Galatia. They revisited the cities which Paul had previously evangelized (2 or 3 years ago) with Barnabas - Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. At Derbe, Paul became aware of a young convert named Timothy. He was the son of a Jewish mother who apparently had been converted on Paul's previous journey, and Timothy some time later. The believers in the two closest cities vouched for their honest demeanor. His father, on the other hand, was Greek.

Verse 3.

Before taking Timothy with him, Paul felt it necessary to have him circumcised, so it would not be a stumbling block to any Jews in his participating in the Gospel ministry. Paul speaks of his attitude in I Corinthians 9:20 - "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law..." All issues were measured by whether they helped or hurt the spreading of the Gospel. It was widely known that Timothy's father was Greek.



Lesson XX continued

## Verse 4.

In I Timothy 4:14 it is mentioned that Timothy was given "by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" and by Paul also. Thus he was commended to the ministry by his brethren. Their journey continued, visiting the churches in South Galatia. They also delivered a copy of the Jerusalem Council's pronouncements.

## Verse 5.

Progress is reported – the believers were strengthened and new believers were added to their number every day.

## Verses 6-10.

6 ¶ Now when they had gone throughout Phryg'i-a and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia,  
 7 after they were come to My'si-a, they assayed to go into Bithyn'i-a: but the Spirit suffered them not.  
 8 And they passing by My'si-a came down to Tro'as.  
 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us.  
 10 And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.

## Verses 6-8.

Paul was sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. When he planned his next trip to go east into Asia, the Holy Spirit forbade him. It must have been a strong inner experience. They then went toward Mysia and planned to go into Bithynia. Again the Spirit prompted him not to. The Spirit is named here as the Spirit of Jesus. They went down to Troas on the sea in the northwestern part of Asia (now Turkey). No detail is mentioned as to whether the Spirit's communication was delivered in a different way than the former. To express it that way possibly shows that Paul recognized the second message was directly from Christ.

## Verse 9.

Troas was a busy port for ships going between Asia and Macedonia. Paul was given a positive direction this time in a night vision. A Macedonian man stood before him entreating him to come there to preach the Gospel. That region was the center of power in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. First by King Phillip – then later by Alexander the Great. It had been a Roman Province since 146 B.C. We can assume that the man was dressed in recognizable Macedonian attire. He clearly spoke of his homeland when asking for Paul's help for his people.

## Verse 10.

After the vision, Paul now planned to proceed to Macedonia. In this verse, the narrator changes from 'they' to 'we'. This is the only detail that introduces Luke as now joining Paul, Silas, and

Lesson XX continued

Timothy. He may have been a practicing physician in Troas.

Verses 11-15. On to Phillipi.

11 ¶ Therefore loosing from Tro'as, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Ne-ap'olis;

12 and from thence to Phil'ippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thy-ati'ra, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Verse 11.

A favorable wind brought them across the North Aegean Sea in two days. The first day they reached Samothracia, the day following to Neapolis on the Macedonian coast. It was the closest port to Philippi - some 10 miles inland. A well known and traveled Roman road ended at Philippi. It linked the Adriatic with the Aegean. Luke seems to repeatedly mention details of ports and arrival and departure times in later chapters (20,21,27,28).

Verse 12.

They arrived at Philippi (named after Philip, king of Macedon). Macedonia had been divided into four administrative districts by the Romans, and settled as a Roman colony - the laws and administration were modeled on those of Rome.

Verse 13.

As was his usual custom when visiting a new city, Paul waited for the Sabbath to go to the Jewish synagogue, to the Jew first to spread the gospel. But in Philippi there was no synagogue. Since it only required 10 Jewish men to constitute one, there must have been very few Jews there. They did find out that a group of women met outside the city for prayer: A Jewish woman and some God-fearing Gentiles came together to worship. Paul and his companions went to the location, by the bank of the river Gangites. They sat down with the group and proceeded to tell them the story of Jesus.

Verses 14,15.

One of them was named Lydia (the Lydian woman). The people of the city Thyatira were widely known for excellence in the manufacture and use of purple dye. Lydia had come to Philippi as a trader in that dye. There was a Jewish colony in that city.

Listening to Paul's message, Lydia believed and acknowledged Jesus as Lord and Savior. She was Paul's first convert in Europe. She was baptized, with her household (servants and other dependents). She

Lesson XX continued

strongly urged the missionaries to become her guests at her dwelling. Her first act as a Christian – to show her heart of love and giving. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul.

Next, a girl with a fortune telling spirit accosts Paul. The Pythian god at the shrine of the Delphian Oracle was supposedly inspired by the god Apollo.

## Lesson XXI

The Acts of the Apostles 16:16-18.

The Oracle of Delphi. Pythian god – fortune teller.

16 ¶ And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying:

17 the same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.

18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.

Verse 16.

Next we are introduced to a completely different follower. She is described as a demon-possessed young slave girl that told fortunes for her masters. Also known as a soothsayer or oracle. The public believed that Apollo (sun god) spoke through her. She met and then followed Paul and his companions who were on the way to the place of prayer.

Verse 17.

She followed them day after day and cried out to whoever would listen: "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." This, through true, came from the evil demon within her. Jewish law forbade all magic incantations, or any association with "familiar spirits". This true testimony about them from this evil source would destroy their integrity and honesty through guilt by association.

If Paul accepted this source then the public would think they were working together. It would call into question if what miracles they wrought were also the effects of evil spirits working magic or trickery. Jews would reject them outright – Gentiles would think of them as credible as their servant girl soothsayer, thus useless to them. Something had to be done, and quickly, with finality. She must be freed from this evil demon possessing her.

Verse 18.

After an unnamed number of days, Paul became "grieved". This could not be allowed to continue. He turned around to face her, but addressed the demon directly. He recognized that the demon controlled her. He proceeds to command it to come out of her in the Name of Jesus Christ. The evil spirit came out. This mirrors the previous descriptions in the New Testament. Jesus did this many times. Now His apostles. Now His apostles have the same role, in His Name.

Verses 19-34.

19 ¶ And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the market place unto the rulers,

20 and brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city,

Lesson XXI continued

21 and teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans.

22 And the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.

23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely:

24 who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

25 ¶ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.

26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.

27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.

28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.

29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

#### Verse 19.

The violent reaction. Her masters observed this and apparently drew the conclusion that the girl, without the divining spirit, was now useless. She was previously bold and loud, but she was now shy and silent. They hold Paul and Silas responsible. They grabbed them and took them into the public market. This was the place where the civil magistrates held their office to keep the peace and settle disputes.

#### Verse 20.

These Jews were extreme troublemakers. These foreign strangers were teaching things against Roman law. They were stirring up trouble - disturbing peace and safety.

#### Verse 21.

They also taught religious opinions and rites also foreign to Roman religious customs, their many gods and goddesses. No new gods or new rites were allowed.

#### Verse 22.

The general public rose up together against them. They cried out for punishment. To show their agreement the magistrates tore their clothes to show their own dramatic sense of outrage - and gave

Lesson XXI continued

the order that these two must be immediately beaten with rods (a well documented custom).

## Verse 23.

Romans had no specific limit to the number of blows. The Jews' limit was 39 stripes. When they were beaten enough to satisfy the crowd, they were taken to the local jail. The jailor was told sternly keep them securely.

## Verse 24.

So serious was the charge that they were taken to the "inner prison" - the darkest and most secure cell - possibly a dungeon. Their feet were locked in stocks (wooden with holes), separated by an uncomfortable distance - and they lay on their flayed backs on cold ground. Total defeat, humiliation, and painful discomfort.

## Verse 25.

At midnight they prayed and began singing praises unto God. They could be heard by the other prisoners. Paul and Silas were rejoicing in spite of their suffering and dire circumstances. They were in God's will. They prayed first, possibly for themselves, then for the salvation of those that were persecuting them. Then they sang loud enough for the other prisoners to hear them.

## Verse 26.

There was a sudden earthquake, shaking the prison's foundations. The doors opened and the bands were loosed. Surely this was a miraculous sign from God - these two men were not guilty, but doing God's work. They are set free to continue spreading the Gospel. At this point none of the prisoners tried to escape, because the event so impressed them.

## Verse 27.

The jailor was also now awakened. He looked around and saw the prison doors were all open. He assumed that the prisoners had escaped and that he would be held accountable - the sentence would be his own execution. It was a custom at that time among heathens that when death was inevitable, they would choose to kill themselves. Dying by their own hands was preferable to dying at the hands of others. This man quickly made his choice, and drew his sword.

## Verse 28.

We must keep in mind that it was after midnight. Paul somehow thought (a divine intimation) what the jailor was about to do. He must prevent it - by crying out loud, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." Totally unexpected!

## Verse 29.

Could this be true? He called for a torch to see if this was possibly true. By the time he entered their cell he was trembling. He fell down at their feet.

Lesson XXI continued

## Verse 30.

He brought them out of the dungeon – the inner prison. He must have been aware of the message these men had been preaching – the doctrine of salvation. Only a work of God could have shaken the prison, opened all the doors, and loosed all prisoners' bonds – and yet, no one escaped. Their God must be the true God. This man's heart felt lost, in need of salvation. At this point in his life, it was his greatest concern – what must he do?

## Verse 31.

By grace through faith in only one name: the Lord Jesus Christ. If his family is also presented with this Gospel, and receives it in faith, they will share in this salvation.

## Verse 32.

They taught and proclaimed the Way of Salvation to him and his family (suggests that children were included). They accepted the apostles' words. Paul accepted their sincerity & baptized them. It's been suggested that, because of the time (still night) and the place, it would have been impossible to immerse the jailor and his family. There must have been another method to signify baptism (pouring, or sprinkling). The Jewish tradition required proselytes, including their children, to be baptized in order to join their religion.

## Verse 33.

The jailor showed concern for their well-being, and washed their wounds (stripes).

## Verse 34.

He took them into his house which was most likely adjacent to the jail where the previous activities took place. He no longer had any fear for his own safety. He prepared a meal for them, joyfully, with his whole family – who were now God's children, having forgiveness and hope eternal.

## Verses 35-40.

35 ¶ And when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go.

36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.

37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out.

38 And the sergeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans.

39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.

Lesson XXI continued

Verses 35,36.

In the morning, the magistrates met and decided to let Paul and Silas go. It has been suggested that they were afraid because of the earthquake during the night. It was a sign of Divine displeasure against them for so shamefully treating the two that were not guilty of any criminal acts. They, therefore, wanted them sent away quietly with the least notice possible. They sent underlings to carry the message. The jailor, upon receiving the order, informed Paul that they were released to go on their way.

Verse 37.

Not so, Paul retorts. They were beaten in public with no due process - no stating of charges, no hearing, no judgment, no condemnation. This was skirting Roman law - and especially true because he and Silas were Roman citizens. No citizen should be bound or scourged, condemned or punished, without a hearing. These magistrates had violated all of these, including their final imprisonment.

Paul said "nay" to just going quietly, as if these men had done nothing wrong, or thought to get them to leave before anyone could raise questions about what they had done. Paul insisted that the ones who had done this, had to be humbled because of their illegal proceedings. The public should see that the guilty recognized their injustice and corrected it by publicly going to the prison, and sending the missionaries go off in peace.

Verse 38.

The message was delivered back to the magistrates. The fact that the message included that these two men were Roman citizens made them realize the trouble they could be in.

Verse 39.

They went to the prison and brought them out and entreated them to leave the city. Most likely they admitted no wrongdoing on their own. Possibly they suggested that by leaving, they would avoid any further uproar among the people, which had been the cause of their former troubles (politicians?).

Verse 40.

Before leaving, Paul and Silas revisited Lydia at her home. They had been staying with her while in Philippi. They reassured the brethren that they were okay, and ready to continue their missionary journey - on into more of Macedonia, and eventually south to Athens.

The church started here was to be very supportive to Paul in his continued travels. They sent him money twice to Thessalonica, once to Corinth, and finally to Rome. The Philippian Epistle that Paul wrote to them was about 10 years later.

Next, Acts chapter 17. On to Thessalonica.



Lesson XXII

The Acts of the Apostles 17:1-9. On to Thessalonica.

1 Now when they had passed through Amphip'olis and Apollo'ni-a, they came to Thessaloni'ca, where was a synagogue of the Jews:  
 2 and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures,  
 3 opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.  
 4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.  
 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.  
 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;  
 7 whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.  
 8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.  
 9 And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the others, they let them go.

Verse 1.

the missionaries first pass through Amphipolis - built by an Athenian general as a colony with 10,000 Athenians. Then they also passed through Apollonia. It is likely there were no Jewish settlements in these two cities. They preached to Jews and Hellenist Jews first almost exclusively. They arrived at Thessalonica, highly developed and embellished by Phillip. He was king of Macedonia, named after his daughter. In this larger city, there was a synagogue of the Jews. In other places, Jews had places of prayer called "proseuchas". These were open buildings with many seats like an amphitheater, and usually beside the sea or river - as at Philippi. (Acts 16:13.)

Verses 2,3.

As before, Paul went to the synagogue. He opened the gathered Jews and God-fearers to the Good News of the Gospel through the Old Testament prophecies and promises. The most important points included, firstly, that the Christ (or Messiah) must suffer to be the Savior of Promise. Secondly, the triumphant Messiah, which the majority of Jews wrongly looked for. He also emphasized that he was an eyewitness to the risen Jesus, Who is the Christ.

Verse 4.

Those that believed Paul and Silas hung around with them. These included some of the Jews, more than a few chief women, and a 'great multitude' of devout Greeks. These also included Gentiles that had renounced idolatry and were following the moral law as proselytes to the Jewish religion.

Lesson XXII continued

## Verse 5.

The Jews that didn't believe were moved to do something against these men that caused a disturbing public turmoil. They gathered together a company of lawyers without principle of bad repute. They were known to foment disputes and litigation. Today we might call them ambulance followers. They would have a degree of credit and authority to sway the general public by denouncing the apostles as troublemakers and seditious men. They would work on any side of a matter, as long as they got paid. It seems obvious that they would be paid by the Jewish leaders.

The number of Jews in the city was small - who could not stir up the public by themselves. This company quickly set the city into a general uproar, accusing the apostles of what they were actually doing themselves. They continued to push the crowd to seek these rebels out and bring them before the magistrates for condemnation and punishment. They had information that they were staying with a man named Jason. Once at Jason's house, Paul and Silas weren't there. They weren't satisfied, so they hauled off Jason and certain brethren. They were taken to the rulers and accused of "turning the world upside down" in other places - now in their own city. The opposite was true - the Gospel of Jesus Christ is one of forgiveness and love, acceptance and peace - which does upset those in power and doing evil - against human nature.

## Verse 7.

Jason is accused of harboring these foreigners. They all spoke against the Roman law (the decrees of Caesar), and therefore were criminals - even subscribing to another king - one Jesus. This was the only 'law related' charge they could come up with. This was to give it some form of law, so must be heard by the local rulers.

## Verses 8,9.

Obviously the locals were troubled by this tumult. The rulers were obliged to listen to these allegations but were not willing to go any further against the apostles - and these local believers. They allowed Jason and his companions to pay 'security', or bail, and let them go.

## Verses 10-21.

10 ¶ And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Beroe'a: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.  
 11 These were more noble than those in Thessaloni'ca, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.  
 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.  
 13 But when the Jews of Thessaloni'ca had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Beroe'a, they came thither also, and stirred up the people.  
 14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timothy abode there still.  
 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and

Lesson XXII continued

receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timothy for to come to him with all speed, they departed.

16 ¶ Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.

17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.

18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicure'ans, and of the Sto'ics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areop'agus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is?

20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean.

21 (For all the Athenians, and strangers which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing.)

Verses 10,11.

The local believers considered it best to send Paul and Silas on to the next town after dark. This was Berea on the same gulf as Thessalonica. It was also near the birth place of Alexander the Great: Pella.

Once there they followed their regular custom of going to the local synagogue. Obviously these Jews were of a higher class, educated, noble. The best sign of this was their response to the message of the missionaries. They received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures daily to check their references.

Verse 12.

The Old Testament was important and familiar to them and their daily lives. So in Paul's message concerning Jesus, he introduced them to the promises and prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled by the birth, ministry, teaching, works, trial, execution, and resurrection of Jesus as Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God. Their checking the Scriptures brought a great many to believe the truth. This number also included 'honorable women' that were Greek, and also 'not a few' Greek men. Certainly God-fearers that attended the Synagogue.

Verse 13.

Word traveled back to Thessalonica about Paul and Silas now spreading their message to Berea. They decided to deal with them as they had in their city. So they proceeded to Berea and did their best to stir up the people to do them harm.

Verse 14.

The believers sent Paul with local companions to the sea. Silas and Timothy remained in Berea.

Verse 15.

Those that were helping Paul brought him to Athens. Paul told

Lesson XXII continued

them to go back and tell Silas and Timothy to also come as soon as they could. Silas and Timothy departed.

Athens was founded over 2,000 years before Christ's birth. It was the seat of the Greek Empire. It was named after Athena, another name of Minerva, dedicated to her, and also under her protection. The old city was built upon a rocky hill, called the Acropolis – the upper city. The rest of the city grew on the lower surrounding southern plain. During Roman times it was 22 Roman miles in circumference. The buildings were the finest examples of Greek architecture, many of which can still be seen. It was also at the height of Greek culture of scholars, lawyers, statesmen, philosophers, writers, scientists. Paul was to plan the first Christian church here. Two thirds of the present inhabitants are Christian. There are several churches, Greek Orthodox.

Verse 16.

While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy, he observed that the whole city was full of idols, statues of the various gods and goddesses, shrines and temples. A contemporary of Paul named Petronius wrote of this city: "Our region is so full of deities that you may more frequently meet with a god than a man."

Verse 17.

Paul again went to the local synagogue and disputed with the Jews. Devout persons and God-fearers proselyted to the Jewish faith on the Sabbath. He also went daily to the public square, the market where business was conducted. It was also the public area where citizens also went to talk, catch up with the news, talk philosophy, and any topic of interest. Paul found some that listened to him.

Verse 18.

The news traveled quickly and "certain philosophers of the Epicure'ans, and of the Sto'ics" wanted to check what this new "babbler" was talking about. This was a derogatory term, meaning one who collected the sayings of others without order or method, also prating and impertinent. He seemed to be breaking both Greek and Roman law, against setting forth strange gods. Paul had only one message – Jesus and His resurrection.

Epicureans believed the chief good consisted in the gratification of sensual appetites. They did not believe that gods were directly involved in the world.

Stoics centered on accepting fate. The gods were of no benefit to man. Any good and wise man was equal to Jupiter himself. Both sects rejected the resurrection of the body. The Epicureans also disbelieved in the immortality of the soul. In Paul's later discourses he pointed some of his remarks against these beliefs.

Verse 19.

These men took Paul to the Areopagus. This was a hill near the Aeropolis. It was the location of the supreme court of justice. Its proceedings had the reputation of being sacred and reputable. It was called, in English, Mars Hill. The Greek name of Mars is Ares, who according to tradition was tried and found not guilty by a court

Lesson XXII continued

of 12 gods.

The place of judgment was uncovered. The court was held after dark – so that their considerations would not be distracted by sight. Pleaders were forbidden to use any means that would excite the passions – either pity or aversion. They had to take a very serious oath that only truth would be spoken – statement of facts.

Athenians and visitors would often come together at this place for philosophers and students from all over the civilized world to speak and listen to news and discuss any topics of interest.

Verse 20.

Paul was now known to have a new thing. They wanted to hear more about it. They wanted to hear a full explanation of this "new doctrine", and what it means.

Verse 21.

Having much leisure time, these people gathered to keep up with anything and everything going on, every day. A large, curious audience was guaranteed.

Next – Paul speaks.

Lesson XXIII

The Acts of the Apostles 17:22-31. Paul Speaks on Mars Hill.

22 ¶ Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.  
 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.  
 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;  
 25 neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;  
 26 and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;  
 27 that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:  
 28 for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.  
 29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.  
 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:  
 31 because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Verses 22,23.

Paul stood in the midst of the court area. He begins by remarking about the multitude of objects of worship all over this city – so many religious practices, so many gods. He also observed their devotions related to these shrines and altars. He is depending upon their loyalty to their religion to make them want to know about his. He has seen an altar inscribed to The Unknown God.

This is historical evidence that the Greeks were so superstitious that they had altars to unknown gods, just in case. Paul picks the altar dedicated to a singular Unknown God, and explains that this is the very God that he represents and will enlighten them about. There has been some speculation that the title "unknown god" refers to the Jewish God – whose name was too sacred for the Jews to speak – therefore his name was unknown.

Verse 24.

Paul begins by stating the premise of the Creator God that made the world, everything in it – both heaven and earth. This God could not be limited to any time or place (temples).

In contrast, Greek gods seemed to be confined to their various temples and altars. They were vain statues and not real – having no authority or power – made instead by human hands.

Verse 25.

Paul's God is the opposite – He doesn't require images,

Lesson XXIII continued

buildings, offerings – He needs nothing from man. He doesn't need gifts for His support. Instead, it is He that provides life, form, sustenance, breath, all things necessary for the whole world of creatures to continue. All that any man may have, has come to them from God in the first place, his Creator.

## Verse 26.

He begins by describing the origin of all men from one man (namely Adam). All nations are of one blood race, stock, kindred. The Athenians considered themselves as unique – that their first men sprang up in Attica like radishes. Paul proceeds to describe God scattering men over the face of the earth. This would cancel all disputes, contentious wars and bloodshed – no group or nation was more unique or better than any other. It was by God's providence where and when the different groups would settle and develop. This included Israel and the Jews. But also as the Jews, a people could forfeit their original inheritance. All of world history records continuous rise and fall of civilizations.

## Verse 27.

God's purpose was to give each people opportunity to seek Him – to observe His work in all creation – as Creator preserver and governor of men; this includes His various blessings. "Feel after Him" as a person who is blind and tries to understand his surroundings. This also includes the spiritual part of man – which feels empty and seeking intellectual contentment. God, as Spirit, is not far from every one of us.

## Verse 28.

God is the very source of our existence, our life comes from him and our continual energy – all show His continual presence and power. Without Him we can do nothing or even exist.

Paul points out that Greek poets had expressed the same thing – two that Paul had studied during his earlier general cultural education were Aratus and Cleanthus, as well as others. Also included was the concept that we are his offspring. Examples of their work have come down to us.

## Verse 29.

Paul connects this concept to what he has observed in Athens. As God's children, we must in some manner resemble Him. Therefore, He cannot be in any way similar to images of gold, silver, or stone – all made by the talents of men. We, being living, intelligent people – so also must God be, but also much greater, more excellent than His creation. So also is a man above all images made of dead materials by man. To worship a man is so obviously impious – how much more did it seem wrong to worship images, as if they had life or power, much less intelligence?

## Verse 30.

God always had the indisputable right to demand the worship of his creations. The times of idolatry are times of ignorance. God mercifully overlooked these disgraced actions of men.

Lesson XXIII continued

## Verse 31.

But now God has condescended to provide a revelation of Himself. With this revealing comes man's responsibility. God has appointed a day of judgment. Man must repent. The world will be judged in righteousness by the One God has ordained – this is as certain as He was raised from the dead. This was part of Christ's message to His followers (Matthew 25:31; John 5:25). The resurrection is incontestable proof of God's hand to the whole truth of Christ's message and future role as judge.

## Verses 32-34.

32 ¶ And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

33 So Paul departed from among them.

34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Di-onys'ius the Areop'agite, and a woman named Dam'aris, and others with them.

## Verse 32.

This was not the end of Paul's speaking – he would have continued the message of forgiveness and salvation through the sacrificial death of Christ, His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God in heaven.

What stopped his discourse was the mention of the resurrection. As noted before, the Epicureans did not believe this, so they reacted by mocking Paul – and laughing at him, and most likely left, not wishing to hear any more from him. The crowd broke up but some (the Stoics perhaps) said they wanted to hear Paul continue about this subject.

## Verse 33.

Paul also left the crowd.

## Verse 34.

There was a group of men that accepted the doctrines Paul preached and they stayed with him. One is identified as Dionysius a judge of the very court where Paul had just set forth. He would have been of the highest public reputation. Areopagite – meaning official of the Areopagus (Supreme Court of Athens). A woman named Damaris is mentioned but no detail is included.

## Acts 18:1-4. On to Corinth.

1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth;  
2 and found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome,) and came unto them.

3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: (for by their occupation they were tentmakers.)

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.



Lesson XXIII continued

## Verse 1.

Apparently Paul only stayed in Athens a short time (perhaps a few months) with only limited success in converting traditional Greeks. And so he proceeded to Corinth – about 50 miles to the east of Athens. It was the capital of the area named Peloponnesus. It has superb public buildings, including the Corinthian order of column and capital in architecture.

## Verses 2,3.

Paul found a Jew of the same craft as he, and talked to him about joining him in working the same vocation – tent-making. His name was Aquila, his wife, named Priscilla. They had only recently come from Rome, because of the decree of Claudius the Roman Emperor, that all Jews must leave. Apparently this was a result of some insurrection problems. It did not last – in a short time the city again was full of Jews.

There is no mention of their conversion – but it can be assumed that in Paul's time with them, he spoke to them the Gospel and they responded positively. It was a common practice even among well-educated Jews that learning a trade was preferable so that one could provided for their material needs if necessary. We see Paul doing so on many occasions, not wanting to be a burden, or being accused of spreading the Gospel for reward. This was the case at Ephesus and Corinth among others.

The Greek word translated – tent-maker. This could refer to small portable tents soldiers and travelers carried on their journeys. Some suggest they were made of animal skins – others of linen cloth. Others suggest hangings or curtains. Whatever it was, it was a useful and honest trade, working with his hands.

## Verse 4.

Paul followed his custom of going to the local synagogue every Sabbath and preached Salvation through Christ, reasoning with them from the Old Testament, the prophecies and promises that spoke of all the things He fulfilled. Both Jews and Greeks were persuaded.

In his Epistle to this beginning church, I Corinthians 1:14-16, Paul mentions some of the individuals who he personally also baptized – Epenetus (Romans 15:5), Stephanas and family, Crispus and Gaius.

Next, Silas and Timothy arrive at Corinth.

Lesson XXIV

The Acts of the Apostles 18:5-11.  
 Silas and Timothy Arrive in Corinth.

5 ¶ And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.

6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man's house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.

8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.

9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace:

10 for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.

11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

#### Verse 5.

Paul had left these two in Berea when he was forced to leave because of persecution. Next, he had sent word for them to join him at Athens. I Thessalonians 3:10 mentions that when they got to Athens, he sent them to comfort and establish the Church at Thessalonica. There is no mention of how long they stayed there, but they didn't rejoin him until some time after he came to Corinth. Apparently Paul was greatly encouraged by Timothy's report concerning the Thessalonian Church. It is likely that Paul's first letter to that church was also the first epistle he wrote. Once his co-missionaries were with him, he was 'pressed in the Spirit to spend all his time and effort preaching Christ to the Jews - no more working his trade.

#### Verse 6.

The Jewish response was to completely and continuously oppose Paul and his message. Rather than searching the Scriptures and reasoning together, these people "blasphemed", calling them names and cursing them.

Paul saw no point in continuing with them. He made a gesture similar to dusting off his feet with his clothes. This signified, from Nehemiah 5:13 - "Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labor, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied..." These were disobedient people. Their coming destruction would be their own fault: "the blood would be upon their own heads."

Calling himself clean, Paul means that he is innocent of their death and ruin. Paul had offered the way of salvation to them in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They utterly rejected it and him. From now on he will waste no more effort with them, but now he will openly spend the majority of his time with Gentiles. From this time onward

Lesson XXIV continued

it seems that the Jews systematically opposed the Gospel. Paul would still offer the Word to Jews wherever he went, until opposition turned against him. He then turned exclusively to any that would listen among the general population, Gentiles.

## Verse 7.

Paul now leaves the house of Aquila and Priscilla and goes to the house of Justus, obviously a Gentile God-fearer, in a different quarter of the city, and close by the synagogue.

## Verse 8.

The chief ruler of the synagogue, named Crispus, became a believer, and the rest of his household also. His office was extremely important: he presided over assemblies, interpreted the law, passed sentence, solemnized marriages, issued divorces. His conversion certainly would have greatly angered the Jews.

After Paul had turned almost exclusively to the Gentiles, here being mentioned that many had been reached by Paul's Gospel and believed, then were baptized.

## Verse 9.

Paul, by this time, may have been discouraged by the continued opposition of the great majority of the Jews. They even may have been plotting his arrest and death. He may have been considering leaving Corinth.

## Verse 10.

At this particular point, God chose to give Paul a night vision. He must not fear to continue preaching in public. God would be with him, and protect him. There are more people in that city God calls His own. This brought encouragement, comfort, and assurance.

In I Corinthians 2:3, Paul recounts: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling."

## Verse 11.

Paul remained in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the Word of God. Some scholars think he wrote the first epistle to the Thessalonians while here. The second followed not much later. Others think his letter to the Galatians was also written during this time.

## Verses 12-17.

12 ¶ And when Gal'li-o was the deputy of Achai'a, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat,

13 saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.

14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gal'li-o said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you:

15 but if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters.

16 And he drave them from the judgment seat.

Lesson XXIV continued

17 Then all the Greeks took Sos'thenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gal'li-o cared for none of those things.

The geographical region of Greece between Thessaly and the southern coasts of Peloponnesus was called Achaia. The office of governor meant Gallio was the deputy for Roman law there - also known as proconsul.

At this point, the Jews decided to act. Getting a mob together, they went after Paul, and took him to be judged by the Roman governor.

Verse 13.

They brought forth the charge of Paul's breaking the law of worshiping God in the wrong way. The Romans allowed the Jews to worship God according to their own religious law. The worship of the Greek gods were also established - by Roman Law. The Jews were trying to accuse Paul of breaking both sets of laws - he rejected the Jewish ways and also the Roman pantheon. He was therefore not recognized as a Jew or a Gentile, but making up his own way of worship - breaking all accepted laws. His attempt to persuade others to join him was dangerous to civic peace and order. He must be trying to cause rebellion - he must be dealt with severely - the ultimate - being put to death.

Verse 14.

As Paul was about to speak in his own defense, Gallio made a decision to deal with the matter without Paul even speaking. He must have observed those Jewish accusers had questionable motivation - envy and malice. He recognized no criminal laws broken - no injustice. No individual had been wronged or injured, nor any group, or the government. He goes on to explain that under other circumstances, he would patiently listen to them - if their case had any obvious merit.

Verse 15.

He rightly sees through their accusations. They were only talking about doctrines of their religion, and what names were being used: Jesus or Messiah, and so forth. These things only concerned the Jewish law and religion. The Jews should take care of these things by themselves. Roman law allowed religious freedom for Jews and Greeks. He was not going to meddle in religious opinions.

Verse 16.

He could see nothing of value in continuing this, so he told them all to leave - they were officially dismissed.

Verse 17.

The group of Greeks that were nearby acted out by taking Sothenes (the chief ruler of the synagogue and beating him nearby the judgment seat. Apparently the former ruler Crispus had been replaced because he had accepted Christ, and was on Paul's side. The Greeks were lashing out at the Jews for creating such a frivolous and

Lesson XXIV continued

mean-spirited uproar.

Gallio didn't intercede with whatever these bothersome people were doing to each other. They weren't worthy of his attention.

Verses 18-21.

18 ¶ And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cen'chre-ae: for he had a vow. Num. 6.18

19 And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they desired him to tarry longer time with them, he consented not;

21 but bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus.

It has been suggested that Paul remained here for about 2 years. Having no luck in persecuting him, the local Jews knew they had no hope in further action. It may have also been because Paul was known as a Roman citizen. Opinions are mixed as to the shaving of the head for a vow was done by Paul, or Aquila - or both together. This was known as a Nazarite vow. Cenchrea was the port, nearest the east coast of Isthmus of Corinth. This was nearest port in order to sail across the Aegean Sea to Syria, and the city of Ephesus.

Verse 19.

Ephesus was a flourishing city at this time. Before this area of Asia Minor was called Ionia - then Natolia. It was very advanced culturally: great buildings, eminent philosophers & orators. The famous temple of Diana here was called one of the 7 wonders of the world.

Verse 20.

Paul was to leave Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus. He spent at least one Sabbath there reasoning with the Jews concerning the Old Testament Scriptures that prophesied about Jesus. How long he stayed is not recorded, but when told about his plan to go to Jerusalem they entreated him to stay a longer time. He would not give in to them.

Verse 21.

Paul explains that the next great Passover celebration was the reason for his haste. Not only would it be possible time to visit with the brethren, many his personal friends, but also able to preach to the thousands of visitors who came to Jerusalem for this feast also. He promises to come back "if God will." He will later spend 3 years (Acts 20:31) here firmly establishing the church there. Finally he sailed from Ephesus to the Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast of Israel, then he went up to Jerusalem.

Next - to the churches - Jerusalem, Galatia, Phrygia, back to Ephesus.

Lesson XXV

The Acts of the Apostles 18:22-28. To the Churches - Jerusalem, Galatia, Phrygia, back to Ephesus.

22 ¶ And when he had landed at Caesare'a, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to An'ti-och.

23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phryg'i-a in order, strengthening all the disciples.

24 ¶ And a certain Jew named Apol'los, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achai'a, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace:

28 for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

#### Verse 22.

After he landed at Caesarea, Paul traveled up to Jerusalem - from sea level up the mountainous trail to the city at the top. The believers in Jerusalem were generally referred to as "The Church", it being the original place and people where it began. It was where the Apostles were. It was the mother church - all others were daughter churches. Paul saluted the brethren, then proceeded to Antioch, in Syria to the north.

#### Verse 23.

After staying with the brethren there for a short time, Paul went to Asia Minor, the provinces of Galatia and Phrygia. Luke adds the words "in order" to describe the planned succession of his stops. He was continuing to encourage, teach, and strengthen all the believers.

#### Verse 24.

A new character makes his appearance. He is introduced as a Jew, born in Alexandria (in Egypt). Strangely, he is named Apollos - from the Greek god Apollo, god of the sun. This may suggest that he and his parents were born Gentiles and converted to Judaism after their son was already named. His birthplace was the celebrated city founded by Alexander the Great. It was on the Mediterranean Sea, about 12 miles west of the main branch of the Nile River. It was also known as a center of learning, an academy of philosophers - known as the Muscam. Also the famous library was there.

This man was "eloquent", a highly cultivated, and powerful speaker. He also was very well versed in the Jewish Law and prophets. In addition he had been instructed in the Way, the doctrine of Jesus as the Christ. He, here, has come to Ephesus.

Lesson XXV continued

## Verse 25.

He was full of zeal to speak diligently concerning the truth. His knowledge, however, was limited to only those things which came from John the Baptist's ministry.

## Verse 26.

In Ephesus he began boldly speaking in the synagogue. Aquila and Priscilla heard him, realized his limitation. "More perfectly" describes their taking him aside to share with him the rest of the story concerning the finished work of Christ, His resurrection, the beginning church.

## Verse 27.

In a few ancient manuscripts the following is added: "But certain Corinthians who were visiting Ephesus, entreated him to pass over with them to their own country." When Apollos decided to go to Achaia the brethren at Ephesus wrote to the disciples at Corinth that they should receive him as a teacher. He was there a while, and helped a great deal. Through grace all believers had accepted the true Gospel, and through grace Apollos had helped the believers at Corinth.

## Verse 28.

He vehemently confuted the Jews in public. He showed by the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus, who had ministered among them, whom they crucified, was the promised Messiah, salvation was found in none other. The Jews revered the Old Testament as divinely inspired and would therefore have been forced to pay careful attention. His arguments were powerful, convincing many.

## Acts 19:1-7.

1 And it came to pass, that, while Apol'los was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples,

2 he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism.

4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

7 And all the men were about twelve.

## Verse 1.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul went through the parts of Asia Minor east of Ephesus - Galatia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, and Lydia - the upper coasts, to Ephesus. There he found a group of disciples.

Lesson XXV continued

## Verse 2-4.

It seems these Asiatic Jews had been in Jerusalem and had heard John the Baptist preaching, believed, and received his baptism. That was about 26 years before this time. They had accepted his message about the coming Savior, without any further instruction or experience. Paul perceived this, asking if they had received the Holy Spirit. This dramatically showed the difference of disciples of John who were baptized unto repentance. Through Jesus they were baptized with the Holy Spirit.

This is the distinctive difference between other religions (or belief systems), and true disciples of Christ. This experience enlightens the mind, convinces of sin, righteousness, and judgment. It witnesses to the conscience that they are God's children and purifies the heart, gives comfort, peace, hope, assurance, and joy.

## Verse 5.

Obviously, these men readily wanted to be baptized according to the Gospel of Jesus.

## Verses 6,7.

Paul began doing so personally by laying on of hands. The Holy Spirit filled them. They spoke in tongues, and prophesied. They spoke in different languages, praising God and preaching the Gospel.

## Verses 8-12.

8 ¶ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.

9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyran'nus.

10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

11 ¶ And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:

12 so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

## Verse 8.

Paul continued for three months, speaking boldly in the local synagogue. He disputed with the Jews concerning the Old Testament Scriptures, trying to persuade them of the true fulfillment by Jesus the Messiah, and the kingdom of God.

## Verse 9.

As before, an uncounted number rejected the Gospel, and "were hardened". They openly spoke against those that believed - calling "that way" evil. Paul knew at this point it was time to stop going to the synagogue. He and those that believed him (now disciples) went to a new location, the school of Tyrannus. No doubt they paid for its use. Tyrannus was not prejudiced against these Christians. Nothing



Lesson XXV continued

else is mentioned about him or his school.

Verse 10.

For two years this ministry continued. All who desired to hear were drawn from all over the region. It is emphasized that both Jews and Greeks were among this group. Greeks would actually included any non-Jews from whatever background they had. It is possible that Paul and other disciples did some traveling to the nearby towns and villages spreading the "word of the Lord Jesus".

Verse 11.

To bear witness that Paul spoke truth concerning God, and His Gospel of His Son, God "wrought special miracles".

Verse 12.

One method concerned cloths, either handkerchiefs carried by Paul, or sashes, tied about the waist. They were loaned out to the sick. In this instance, God used these means to heal the sick and diseased, by laying these cloths upon them. Also, evil spirits were driven out. These clothes were used by Paul while working. He wore a handkerchief as a headband, and a sash as an apron around the waist. This brings to mind the healing of the woman who touched the hem of the garment of Jesus. Faith, not magic.

Verses 13-20.

13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.

14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye?

16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Verse 13.

Here are introduced a group of Jews that had no fixed place to live - they were wanderers. They performed exorcisms, for money. They had heard of Paul casting out demons through the Name of Jesus. If he could do it, why couldn't they? If so, they could make more money. It appears that demon possession was fairly common then. They put it to the test by saying the Name of Jesus (Who Paul preached),

Lesson XXV continued

over a small number of people that had evil spirits.

Verse 14.

These exorcists are identified as the seven sons of the priest Sceva. It was not uncommon to find other Jews that professed to be able to cast out demons.

Verse 15.

One man, possessed, answered them. He knew Who Jesus is, and who Paul is. However, these men belonged to neither. They have no authority, no backup.

Verse 16.

This man to violently jumped on these men, tore them up, stripped their upper clothing, and wounded them. All seven ran out of the house half naked and wounded.

Verse 17.

The news of this event spread quickly among the Jews and Greeks at Ephesus. It made a strong impression concerning the value and authority of the Name of Jesus. And that this Name could not be used by such as the lying exorcists.

Verse 18.

Ephesus was widely known at that time to abound with magical arts, spell casting, amulets with various powers, potions, charms to keep evil spirits away, etc. When many believed, they felt bound to confess their previous involvement with all such superstitions - now rejecting and putting these things out of their lives.

Verse 19.

Those that practiced and studied these "curious arts" brought their books on these subjects, piled them together, and publicly burned them. These would have been scrolls and parchments. Some similar works have survived. The truth of Christianity had convinced them of the worthless and even harmful nature of these curious arts. They divested their homes of all paraphernalia - especially books.

It is also worth mentioning that a great part of the value of the magical arts related to their secrecy. To confess and show these things would therefore destroy their power (whether actual or only in appearance). Some persons thought it of interest to approximate the value of these records of magical arts. 50,000 pieces of silver in Roman coins would be equal to about a million dollars today. This gives some idea of how prevalent these things were.

Verse 20.

The Word of God concerning Jesus spread far and wide and faith in its message multiplied. The conflict Paul mentions in I Corinthians 15 "fought with wild beasts at Ephesus" refers to that with Demetrius later at the end of this chapter.

Next - time to move on.

Lesson XXVI

The Acts of the Apostles 19:21-41. Still at Ephesus.

21 ¶ After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achai'a, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.  
22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timothy and Eras'tus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.  
23 ¶ And the same time there arose no small stir about that way.  
24 For a certain man named Deme'tri-us, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;  
25 whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.  
26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:  
27 so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.  
28 ¶ And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.  
29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gai'us and Aristar'chus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theater.  
30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not.  
31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theater.  
32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together.  
33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defense unto the people.  
34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.  
35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?  
36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly.  
37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess.  
38 Wherefore if Deme'tri-us, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another.  
39 But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly.  
40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this day's uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse.

Lesson XXVI continued

41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.

Verse 21.

Paul had spent probably the whole winter of 58 A.D. (as mentioned in I Cor. 16:56) in Corinth. He then decided to visit Jerusalem, after which he resolved to actually travel to Rome. Apparently he had been pondering this for a considerable time (Romans 1:10,13; 16:23). It is generally assumed that while still at Ephesus that he wrote I Corinthians. The news reached him about division and some disorder now present in the Church. Some followed Paul above all others. Another group favored Apollos. Some Christians were suing each other in the heathen courts. They needed clear, forceful, and direct correction, which Paul delivered to them through this epistle.

Verse 22.

Paul decided to send Timothy and Erastus (two of his companions) back to Greece, while he stayed in Asia. Erastus is first mentioned here, and again as being left at Corinth (II Timothy 4:20). Timothy was directed to go all the way to Corinth (I Corinthians 4:13), and after that to return to Paul at Ephesus (I Corinthians 16:11). Paul's reason to continue in Asia was probably to collect offerings for the poor saints in Jerusalem.

Verse 23.

Again, the new Gospel of Salvation through Jesus is called "The Way". The way, or path, in which He wills men to walk, to go safely through life and finally attain everlasting life. Jewish writers called the whole doctrine and practice of Christianity by it.

Verse 24.

The leader of a group of craftsmen who made silver shrines for the goddess Diana is deeply concerned. His name is Demetrius. These shrines were small portable representations of the widely known Temple of Diana in Ephesus. Visitors would buy them as souvenirs and as proof of their devotion to the goddess. Supposedly, the temple took 220 years to be completed, and supported by donations from all over Asia. In modern times it was turned into a Turkish mosque.

Verse 25.

Demetrius called a meeting of his fellow craftsmen, reminding them how they all made a good living.

Verse 26.

He proceeds to describe this new threat to them all. And not in Ephesus only, but throughout Asia. This man Paul had successfully turned a large group of people from their traditional gods. Paul's main argument was, how could any god have power or authority if it was made by human hands?

Verse 27.

He goes further. Not only was their craft in danger, but the "temple of the great goddess Diana" would also be despised, her magnificence destroyed. This threatened the entire region. Diana

Lesson XXVI continued

was represented as universal nature, mother goddess of all things, animals, plants, people, the sea, the sun. This is why she was called The Great Goddess, unique to Ephesus and Asia, not the simple goddess of the hunt and chastity of Greek mythology.

Verse 28.

The reaction from this group was great anger – this affront to their living and belief – they cry out: "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Verse 29.

Obviously they carry their outrage far and wide throughout the city, creating general confusion. The mob looked for and found someone to punish. Two of Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia – Gaius and Aristarchus. They took them to the local theater. These spacious, public spaces were often used for public assemblies, to deal with possible threats to public order and safety. Things would be brought up, discussed, and decided. This was a Greek custom.

Verse 30.

Though Paul would have gone into the theater to speak on his companions' behalf, some of his disciples prevented him.

Verse 31.

Some influential and no doubt wealthy individuals here called "chiefs of Asia" sent Paul word not to take such a dangerous chance. They are called also his friends – possibly Christian believers, who didn't want him in such a situation.

Verse 32.

In describing the mob, some didn't even know why they were there, what the reason, cause, or subject. Different people cried out one thing, some cried out another thing. No agreement – just upset people, confused and wanting some explanation, some reason, wanting something to justify their outrage – an object of their passion.

Verse 33.

Apparently some Jews present wanted to shift any blame about the dispute from them. The Jews were considered the same as Christians at the time – both groups were seen as non-believers in their famous Diana. A man named Alexander is brought forward to speak for them. He must have been an eloquent speaker. Accepting their direction, he beckoned with his hand to get the crowd's attention, so he could speak his piece. He wanted to defend the Jews, and possibly point to Paul and his followers as the cause of all the trouble.

Verse 34.

Once the news circulated that this man was a Jew, the whole Gentile crowd began chanting, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." This continued for two hours.

Verse 35.

Finally, an important local official, here identified as

Lesson XXVI continued

town-clerk, quieted the crowd. His success and speech may reflect that his job was of greater importance - such as magistrate - appealing to local law as the correct course to follow.

He calls their attention to the well known fact that Ephesus was the center of worship of Diana, the Great Goddess. There was no point in their doing all this chanting, especially in such a public spectacle. The men accused had broken no laws, and had not publicly started any rebellion.

Verse 36.

Therefore, they should cease this public disruption of the peace, before they were blamed for it. The first image of Diana was reputed to have fallen down from Jupiter, from heaven. It was so old that no one knew who made it or when it was made. The priests used these facts to credit Jupiter himself as sending it to them. No one could disprove their assertion.

Verse 37.

He states that these men had done no damage to their sacred places, and had not blasphemed their goddess. No law had been broken.

Verse 38.

In conclusion, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case involving a breach in the law, they can take it before the municipal courts in their regular sessions. They can make their accusation, the other side can offer their defense, and the proconsul will impartially decide the just outcome.

Verse 39.

On the other hand, if their main concern relates to national worship, or rebellion against the state - these also can't be decided by such a mob. It must be heard before a lawful assembly, one properly authorized to hear the case and make a determination.

Verse 40.

The Romans always dreaded any sign of insurrection. Any public uproar was cast in this category. Anyone who instigated such a disturbance was liable to face a death penalty. This official hints at this possibility. There was danger if called into question - there being no lawful reason, nothing that could be proven. Demetrius should especially be concerned, being the main instigator. Those accused could witness against him, that he was indeed the one who raised such a passionate and groundless outcry.

Verse 41.

He finished his speaking, and dismissed the assembly. Being brought back to calmness and quiet, we can understand that the mob went on their way. This was the reason human government and justice are from God: to maintain safety and order for person and property, for the good of all.

End of Chapter 19. Next, back to Paul and his journey.

Lesson XXVII

The Acts of the Apostles 20:1-6.  
Back to Macedonia, then Greece, Troas.

1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia.  
2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece,  
3 and there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia.  
4 And there accompanied him into Asia So'pater of Beroe'a; and of the Thessalo'ni-ans, Aristar'chus and Secun'dus; and Gai'us of Derbe, and Timothy; and of Asia, Tych'icus and Troph'imus.  
5 These going before tarried for us at Tro'as.  
6 And we sailed away from Phil'ippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Tro'as in five days; where we abode seven days.

## Verse 1.

Once the uproar caused by Demetrius was over, Paul decided to leave Ephesus before he had previously planned. He met with the brethren, embraced them, and took off to Macedonia.

## Verse 2.

Apparently, as he went through Macedonia on his way to Greece, he visited the churches he had planted and "had given them much exhortation", preaching strong encouragement. He then reached Greece proper.

## Verse 3.

He stayed there 3 months, no doubt visiting the churches (groups of believers) in Corinth, Athens, and Achaia. At the time that Paul planned to return to Jerusalem, he first would sail to Syria. This was the quickest route. He then became aware that a group of Jews laid in wait for him. He would be most vulnerable to attack on the ship. They might possibly seize him and sell him for a slave, and also rob him of the collection money he was taking to Jerusalem to the poor saints.

Apparently, he could travel more safely by land, through Macedonia to Troas. From there he could sail to Syria, and proceed to Jerusalem from there. The journey is described in this and the following chapter.

## Verse 4.

A few companions went with him. Apparently he tarried at some location on the way. The rest continued on to Troas and waited for him there.

First mentioned is Sopater of Berea. He is identified in Romans 16:21 as Paul's kinsman. There was also Aristarchus from Thessalonica, who later went to Rome with Paul. Secundus is mentioned only here. Gaius of Derbe - his family home. Whether the Gaius mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 1:14 is the same man is uncertain. This name was quite common. John directs his 3<sup>rd</sup> Epistle to Gaius.

Lesson XXVII continued

Timothy was previously introduced in chapter 16. Paul was to write 2 Epistles to him. He was a native of Lystra.

From Asia, Tychicus. Paul mentions him in Ephesians 6:21,22. He is described as a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord. Paul sent him to Ephesus as his representative, to check up on the believers and comfort their hearts. He was also sent to Colossae (Colossians 4:7,8). Also to Crete (mentioned in Titus 3:12). He must have been extremely close with Paul, and most trusted.

Trophimus is last mentioned, also from Ephesus. He was with Paul from Ephesus into Greece, now on to Jerusalem (chapter 21:29). No doubt he accompanied him on other journeys. In II Timothy 4:20, he was left, and ill, at Miletus.

Verse 5.

They waited at Troas - a small town in Phrygia Minor.

Verse 6.

The days of unleavened bread refer to the days of the passover. Luke again here includes himself with Paul, writing "we sailed away from Phil'ippi", and "we abode". Luke stays with Paul through the remaining journeys. The trip from Philippi to Troas took 5 days. They had to stay in sight of the coast. They remained in Troas 7 days.

Verses 7-21.

7 ¶ And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eu'tychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.

10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him.

11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

13 ¶ And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.

14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mityl'ne.

15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chi'os; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyl'li-um; and the next day we came to Mile'tus.

16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost.



Lesson XXVII continued

17 ¶ And from Mile'tus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them,

¶ Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,

19 serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20 and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,

21 testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 7.

When Sunday came, the first day of the week, it was the Lord's day. The Christian Sabbath was when they commemorated Christ's resurrection, to break bread. They may have done this each time they met. It is also likely that they also had a common meal or 'love feast'. At some point, Paul began preaching, and continued until midnight when he was interrupted.

Verse 8.

This takes place in a well lit upper chamber.

Verse 9.

A young man named Eutychus was sitting in a window opening. Paul had been preaching for several hours. The young man fell asleep and slumped down as he slept. He lost his balance and fell backwards and onto the ground. When they reached him, he was dead.

Verse 10.

Paul also went down to where the young man was. He stretched himself upon him. This was in the same manner that Elisha had done on the Shunammite's son II Kings 4:33-35. He embraced him, and announced that the young man was now alive. No further ado about it.

Verse 11.

Paul, having saved the young man's life, went back upstairs, and had something to eat. He then talked through the rest of the night (possibly 5 to 6 hours). Once dawn came he left. The description of this as "talk" is different from preaching. We can imagine that a good part of this could have included Paul's answering many questions, and explanations of how this new faith changed people's beliefs and manner of living. At dawn, Paul departed on foot to Assos.

Verse 12.

When the young man was brought back to the meeting chamber, the brethren were greatly comforted.

Verse 13.

Paul's companions, including Luke, went on by foot to Assos as Paul had instructed them. Apparently it was a shorter distance by land. Once there, Paul would again join them on the ship.

Lesson XXVII continued

Verse 14.

At Assos, Paul joins them, and they sail on to Mitylene.

Verse 15.

They sailed on to another island called Chios. They did not stop, but sailed on to yet another island, Samos – also in the Aegean Sea. They passed it and went on to Trogyllium, a city of Ionia. They stayed there overnight, and continued the following day to Miletus. It was a celebrated city in the province of Caria. Some prominent Greek intellectuals and philosophers were born there.

Verse 16.

Paul had decided not to stop by Ephesus at this time, wanting to reach Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. It would be an opportunity to reach out and preach to the multitudes of Jews from different locations, who would be in Jerusalem for the festival. Also, it was now a celebration of the first Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the first believers, and when a multitude were converted to Christ.

Verse 17.

From Miletus, he sent a message to Ephesus, calling for the elders (or presbyters) of the Church, and those with authority (also called bishops. Since he wasn't going to stop in Ephesus, he wanted to give some very specific instructions and warnings to these leaders to communicate to the rest of the Church.

Verse 18.

When they arrived, Paul asks them to think about the way he was with them, what manner and consistent care he showed toward them.

Verse 19.

He then specifically mentions his central motive – "serving the Lord with all humility". He had been faithful to his responsibility as an apostle. He also mentions his danger. He had to be careful because of the hostility of the Jews that sought his harm.

Verse 20.

He mentions that he kept back nothing that was profitable to them. He had told them the simple and the more complicated, difficult truths of the Gospel, as well as what was now expected of them in their lives as Children of God. He also warns them about the traditional biases of the Jews and Gentiles, and their new hostility toward "The Way". He was being a good shepherd – guiding, warning, feeding the flock. He did this with the way he lived, taught in public, and also in individual homes.

Verse 21.

Paul usually began preaching to the Jews. In this case, he did so for three months. When he realized that those that hadn't responded to his words had become hardened and now hostile, he left the synagogue and turned to the general population – the Greeks.

He summarizes his Gospel message: repentance towards God. All

Lesson XXVII continued

have sinned against God and should humble themselves before Him. This brings the soul to recognize guilt and the need for forgiveness. Then God's mercy through Jesus Christ is revealed and shown to be the only pardon, and remedy for our sins. Faith in Him and His sacrifice for their sins and his resurrection for their justification. Paul mentions these essential doctrines in many of his Epistles (Romans 4:25; 5:8-10).

Next, on to Jerusalem.

Lesson XXVIII

The Acts of the Apostles 20:22-38. On to Jerusalem.

22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23 save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel.

34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

35 I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

36 ¶ And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him,

38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Verse 22.

Paul describes the strong inner drive, the influence of the Holy Spirit that moves him to now go to Jerusalem. This suggests that it was not his own personal desire, wish, or will to go there. He realized that there was no way to know what would happen to him there. He must go nevertheless.

Verse 23.

In every city where he proclaims the Gospel, the Holy Spirit gives him a strong impression that "bonds and afflictions" await him.

Verse 24.

What is Paul's attitude toward these possibilities or even certainties? Any of these possibilities are unimportant to him

Lesson XXVIII continued

because he doesn't count his life as his own. He fears neither death nor hardship. His life is in God's hands, his life is serving the Lord, under His guidance and direction. Only God's perfect will shall come to pass. To finish his ministry according to God's plan would be his greatest joy – that it pleased and glorified God. In his ministry, he strenuously asserted the Good News of God's grace, the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes in Jesus Christ.

## Verse 25.

Paul now wants all those present with him at that moment to know that he had no certainty he would ever see them again. This implies that his future was not in his own hands, especially the dangers he would continue to face.

## Verse 26.

He wants his listeners to take note that in his ministry, he has offered the Gospel to everyone that would listen. Therefore, if anyone, Jew or Gentile, perishes in their sins, their blood shall be upon their own heads, not on Paul's.

## Verse 27.

He has also not held back or concealed anything, through fear or favor, that would benefit them in their spiritual life. This was called the whole counsel of God. This includes all that God has revealed concerning the salvation of men – the whole doctrine of faith in Jesus, the Messiah, the atoning High Priest and everything that Jesus communicated.

## Verse 28.

Paul now focuses on the spiritual leaders, overseers, shepherds, whose role is to observe and deal with the spiritual condition of those in their care – their flock. They must carefully guide and feed the Church of God, purchased by Christ's own blood.

## Verse 29.

Paul points to the time he will no longer be around. There would be evil ones, as wolves among sheep, seeking to tear up and ruin the Church. They would only be interested in their own eating, not feeding the flock.

## Verse 30.

He also predicts that some of their own congregation will come up with perverse things, drawing others to follow them and their lies, denying the truth of the doctrines of Christ crucified. This will cause divisions and splits in the Church.

## Verse 31.

The best way to abide in the truth is to keep watch against evil while remembering the doctrines that Paul had spent 3 years teaching with great care.

## Verse 32.

He commends the brethren to the Lord and the doctrine of

Lesson XXVIII continued

Salvation by Jesus Christ. These things build you up. Jesus is the foundation. God, the great master-builder. His grace and mercy point to the manner, the order, the extent of this building. Each believer becomes the habitation of God through the Holy Spirit. Each believer becomes a Temple of the Lord, to be kept pure, righteous, to continue to mature and grow in grace (sanctification). Children of God with an eternal inheritance.

## Verse 33.

Paul reminds them of the purity of his motives. He never even desired any material gain from anyone. Worldly possessions were not important to true followers of Christ. Christ showed the way. This was the greatest contrast with those described as grievous wolves, who were always seeking their own gain.

## Verse 34.

These believers should also remember that Paul earned his monetary support by working with his hands, both for him and the assistants who traveled with him.

## Verse 35.

They should follow his example in their own lives. Namely, they should also work honestly and diligently, with the thought to help support the weak, those that couldn't support themselves. He reminds them that this also was the teaching of Jesus, quoting the actual words - "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This is the only place in the New Testament that this saying of Jesus is written. The one who gives experiences joy in being able to do good at every opportunity. To be in a position where one has to depend on the charity of others is usually embarrassing, even painful.

## Verse 36.

After these words, Paul knelt down and prayed with all of them. This gesture, kneeling, shows humility and submission, the proper attitude and posture toward God when praying.

## Verses 37,38.

All those present were moved with sorrow. They were crying, embracing, and kissing Paul, because he was leaving, and especially since he had told them that they would never see him again. He was the one that had brought them to a saving knowledge of mercy and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ, with all the joy and peace and love that comes with it. They went with him to see him off.

## Acts 21:1-9.

1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Co'os, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Pat'ara:

2 and finding a ship sailing over unto Phoeni'cia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to

Lesson XXVIII continued

unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 ¶ And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolema'is, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesare'a; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him.

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Verse 1.

Paul and his companions sail from Miletus. A straight course implies wind and tide were right for their direct journey. First, they come to an island in the Aegean Sea called Coos. It was known as the birthplace of Hippocrates, the Greek physician.

The next day, they went to Rhodes - where the Colossus was located. The Colossus was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It was a brass statue of Apollo - so large that a ship in full sail could pass between its legs. It was 106 feet tall. It was knocked down by an earthquake in 224 B.C.

Finally, they arrived at Patara.

Verse 2.

Another ship was found going to Phoenicia (the former name of Syria), and they sailed on it.

Verse 3.

They passed by the Island of Cyprus, on their left side, and continued on to the city of Tyre on the coast of Syria, a major commercial center. The ship was full of cargo to be delivered there.

Verse 4.

There were disciples there that they found. Paul and his friends stayed 7 days. Apparently, there were some disciples that were personally afraid for Paul if he continued on to Jerusalem. They feared that he would be in mortal danger, and earnestly tried to talk him out of it. The Holy Spirit had previously warned Paul of the same danger. Neither then nor now was Paul dissuaded, not counting his own risk, but aiming only for the glory of God, no matter what it cost him. The Holy Spirit neither commanded him to go, nor forbade him. He was left to make his own decision.

Verse 5.

At the end of the 7 days, they began their next journey. They were accompanied by the brethren and their whole families all the way to the edge of the city. At the shore, Paul, Silas and Luke (the "we") knelt down and prayed. The whole gathering would have joined.

Lesson XXVIII continued

## Verse 6.

Taking their leave included giving each other the kiss of peace – the custom of the Jews and early Christians. Paul and his companions took ship and returned home.

## Verse 7.

The next stop, from Tyre, was Ptolemais, a seaport town of Galilee, near Mt. Carmel, between Tyre and Caesarea. It was named after Ptolemy – one of Alexander the Great's generals, the one who ended up ruler of Egypt. The journey by ship ended here. They spent that day with the local believers.

## Verse 8.

Paul's company left there and traveled by land on to Palestine. One of the original seven deacons of the Jerusalem church must have settled here after his dramatic experience with the Ethiopian Eunuch. He invited Paul and company to stay at his home.

## Verse 9.

Philip had four virgin daughters (mature but unmarried) that prophesied. It has been suggested that they were teachers in the church. This is a frequent meaning of the word prophesy.

Next, another warning about Paul's trip to Jerusalem.



## Lesson XXIX

The Acts of the Apostles 21:10-16.  
Agabus' Prophecy about Paul.

10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. Acts 11.28

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

15 ¶ And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem.

16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge.

Verse 10.

After many days at Caesarea, a visitor from Judea came with a message, a prophet named Agabus. He was mentioned previously in Chapter 11:28.

Verse 11.

As the prophets of old, this prophet gives a dramatic demonstrations using an emblem. His first action was to take Paul's belt, and tie his own hands and feet together. He proclaimed his message from the Holy Spirit about the owner of this belt. At Jerusalem, the Jews were going to tie him up and turn him over to the Romans. This obviously would include accusing him of some high crime that would be punishable by death.

Verse 12.

The reaction from all present was to convince Paul not to go on to Jerusalem. This prophecy was fulfilled soon enough - recorded in verse 33 of this chapter.

As noted before, Paul still had the choice.

Verse 13.

Paul's reaction - their entreaties touched him because of their heartfelt sorrow. Their emotion would not deter him. As he stated at every previous occasion, he says that he's ready for being bound, and also to die at Jerusalem - the constant motive for the Name of the Lord Jesus. No other reason could persuade him from this total dedication of his life.

Verse 14.

When everyone realized there was no way, no reason that would cause him to change his mind, they ceased their entreaties. If this

Lesson XXIX continued

was God's will, even as the prophecy of Agabus foretold, then so be it. They would also accept it.

Verse 15.

The next thing to be done was for those who were going with Paul to pack up their things and begin their journey up to Jerusalem.

Verse 16.

A small group of the local believers (from Caesarea) decided to go with Paul's group. One man is named, Mnason (originally from Cyprus). He is called an old disciple (an early convert, or an elderly person), who had a dwelling in Jerusalem, and who had offered his place for them to stay in while there.

Verses 17-34. Paul at Jerusalem.

17 ¶ And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law:

21 and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. 22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

27 ¶ And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Troph'imus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

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30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar:

32 who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle.

Verse 17.

Upon arrival, the brethren of the Jerusalem church welcomed them joyfully.

Verse 18.

The next day, Paul and his companions went to visit James - this man is identified as James the less, cousin to Jesus, the only apostle still in Jerusalem. He was the leader, or bishop. He was a very important member of the church council. All the elders were there also. Possibly, they had been called together, knowing of Paul's arrival and that some serious issues concerning him needed to be addressed.

Verse 19.

Paul was most likely fully aware of the main complaint against him, particularly from Jewish Christians.

After he greets the assembly, he describes his ministry among the Gentiles - that God had been glorified by so many that had become believers in the Gospel of His Son. God would not have so blessed his ministry if it was not His will.

Verse 20.

The assembly expressed approval and joy at God working. But immediately following, the main issue is brought up. The many thousands of Jewish believers presently in Jerusalem for Pentecost are all zealous of the law. The observances of Moses' law would remain in practice until the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 A.D. That therefore made it impossible. Until then Jews and Jewish Christians still included their observance. As long as the majority of all beginning churches were mostly Jewish converts, their traditional observances were part of the church. That was now changed, especially by the ministry of Paul among the Gentiles.

Verse 21.

Word has come to them that Paul's teaching of Jews among these Gentiles, encourages them to abandon their traditions, not to circumcise their children etc. This is stated as forsaking Moses. Nowhere in New Testament Scripture is any suggestion that Paul ever

Lesson XXIX continued

actually taught these things. What he did teach was that Jesus Christ had delivered them from the yoke of the law, which they could never obey perfectly themselves. They did have liberty to wear that yoke if they chose to. They earned no merit toward salvation, but they caused no harm.

## Verse 22.

The elders and James were seriously worried about what was going to happen when the greatest mixed crowd gathered and heard of Paul's presence. Some tumult or confrontation could occur, which could only be destructive. They wanted to prevent this. It would publicly bring ridicule and hatred from the Jewish population and bring down the Romans' reaction with military force.

## Verses 23,24.

They had a plan already. They wanted Paul to follow their direction, which would prevent what they most feared. They have 4 men that had made a vow to God - the Nazarite Vow - not cutting hair or beard until the vow was completed. At the end, all hair was shaved off. It was for spiritual purification. They tell Paul to join them in the purification - and help pay for the expenses involved. These included offerings and sacrifices - lambs, rams, flour, etc. Then they would all have their heads shaved. This would be openly and publicly obvious to any onlookers, that Paul, along with others, was still observing Mosaic Law - walking orderly. This would represent adherence to and respect of the law as holy, just, and good. Paul would follow their advice, acknowledge the four men as following their vow for the right reason - this was usually done in gratitude and thankfulness for mercies already received from God.

## Verse 25.

To also deal with the Gentiles related to observing Mosaic Law, the elders reminded everyone that these things had already been addressed (chapter 15). This had been done at an earlier council meeting, with letters circulated to the churches of mainly Gentiles. These believers were not required to adhere to Mosaic Law. They were to avoid things offered to idols, blood from strangled animals, and from sex outside marriage.

## Verse 26.

Paul complied, went with the men, and on the following day he purified himself with them. They then went to the Temple to declare to the priest that they had completed their vow and had come to make their offerings to God. Some have called into question whether Paul was wrong in including these sacrifices. No writer in the New Testament criticized him, nor did Paul himself. His explanation in I Corinthians 9:20,23 - "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; ... And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

## Verse 27.

Apparently, a group of Jews from Asia had come to Jerusalem. They had great malice against Paul for his ministry in their home

Lesson XXIX continued

country. They were most likely the ones that circulated the false accounts about Paul everywhere they went, and now throughout Jerusalem. They wanted him stopped here and now. They voiced their accusations - stirring up the multitude - and then laid hands on him.

## Verse 28.

They began yelling "Men of Israel, help". They saw him as the man who taught against Jews, Moses' Law, and the Temple, everywhere he went. They imply that if they don't stop him, he will do the same there, as he had done among the Gentiles. They then quickly accused Paul of bringing Greeks (Gentiles) into the Temple. Paul knew the law - no stranger or non-Jew was permitted to go within the holy place. The punishment was death. He had no reason to do such a thing.

## Verse 29.

Their reasoning is explained. Paul had been seen earlier in Jerusalem in the company of Trophimus - an Ephesian. They assumed that Paul was so bold as to bring him also into the temple.

## Verse 30.

The excited and angry crowd rushed together to put hands on him, and took him out of the Temple. They shut the doors behind them so he would have no chance of protection in the sanctuary (the holy place), and that the holy place would not be defiled by the shedding of his blood. It seems clear they wanted to put him to death.

## Verse 31.

This was causing a great commotion - the news traveled quickly to the captain of the band, the Roman Tribune in charge of a troop of soldiers. They lodged in the castle named Antonia - at the northwest corner of the outer wall of the Temple complex. It was higher than and overlooked the whole Temple area. Stairs led down in the porticoes, and the court of the Gentiles, where it appears the Jews were about to kill Paul. The Captain responded quickly to the uproar, taking soldiers and centurions, running down the stairs to where the mob had gathered around Paul. When the crowd saw the Romans, they wisely stopped beating Paul.

## Verse 33.

The captain came near, took hold of him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains. This customarily meant to be bound between two soldiers, one chain on each hand, on each side. In chapter 23:26, we learn that this captain was Claudius Lysias. He then demanded to know who this man was and what he had done.

## Verse 34.

He saw that there were no clean answers to his questions. Different people in the crowd said different things. There was no way to find out from them what started it all. The best plan was to take the man into the castle so that the mob would calm down, ending the tumult - allowing answers to be found in an orderly manner.

Next, Paul speaks to the captain, then to the crowd.

Lesson XXX

The Acts of the Apostles 21:35-40.

Paul speaks to the captain, then to the crowd.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.

37 ¶ And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek?

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?

39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cili'cia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him license, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,

Verses 35,36.

Paul was being taken up the stairs to the castle by the soldiers. He had been rescued from the violence of the multitude that was about to kill him. The crowd followed them crying aloud, "Away with him." To a Jewish mob this phrase always meant, "Kill him", to do away with him. (Luke 23:18, John 19:15).

Verse 37.

As they were about to enter the castle, Paul asks the chief captain if he can speak to him. Apparently, Lysias was not fluent in Latin (not being a native Roman). We later learn in 22:28 that he had purchased Roman citizenship for a large sum. The confusion of voices of the tumult made it impossible for him to clearly grasp what had been said. For these reasons, he asks Paul if he can speak Greek.

Verse 38.

The captain first asks Paul if he is that Egyptian that had caused a great uproar. This man never named claimed to be a prophet. He proclaimed that the walls of Jerusalem would fall down before those that joined him in attacking the city to route the Romans. By his speaking, he raised up a group of near 4,000 men that were murderers – or assassins named after those that carry a curved knife hidden in their clothing to catch their victims by surprise. They had believed his boasting and exaggerated promises. They gathered together in the wilderness, then came toward Jerusalem – they got as far as the Mount of Olives. The Roman governor, Felix, caught up with them with cavalry and infantry. The mob was quickly disbursed, 400 killed, 200 taken prisoners; the Egyptian and some of his closest allies escaped. Nothing was ever heard from or about him again. (Josephus wrote about this.) The captain was guessing that Paul might be this guy. That he had been recognized by the Jewish mob and that was why the uproar started.

Lesson XXX continued

Verse 39.

Paul readily replied, I am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia. It was a very important commercial center in some measure a rival to Rome and Athens. It was important enough that Julius Caesar had given its citizens all the rights and privileges of citizens of Rome. The word "mean" meant great and flourishing.

Verse 40.

Paul was standing on the top part of the stairs, surrounded by Roman soldiers, well out of reach by the mob. The captain had given permission for him to speak. Paul beckoned with his hand, a gesture to get the crowd's attention, and indicating that he would about to speak. The crowd made a great silence. Paul begin speaking in Hebrew.

Acts 22:1-25.

1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defense which I make now unto you.

2 ¶ (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)

3 ¶ I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cili'cia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gama'li-el, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day.

4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 ¶ And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me.

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 ¶ And one Anani'as, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there,

13 came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

Lesson XXX continued

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

17 ¶ And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance;

18 and saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 and when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

22 ¶ And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live.

23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 the chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

Verse 1.

Paul begins with a Hebrew expression that means "brothers and fathers". Then "hear ye my defense". He wishes to explain what they have wrongly accused him as being impossible.

Verse 2.

That the crowd, in hearing Hebrew, kept more quiet, implies that those accusers from Asia thought of him as an imposter that was ignorant and hateful to Jews, only wanting to harm the Jewish religion.

Verse 3.

He emphatically begins, as he had to the captain, by stating that he is a Jew. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. But he was brought up in Jerusalem. He was not only not in any way ignorant of the Jewish religion, but also was taught and supremely trained by the famed instructor, Gamaliel. He learned the law of the fathers and followed them. He was zealous toward God. He then compliments his audience by crediting them with also being zealous toward God.

Verse 4.

Paul not begins to recount the example of his zeal toward God. He persecuted "this way" meaning believers in Jesus. This included some being put to death (example of Stephen's being stoned), others bound and put in prison - both men and women.

Verse 5.

Even the high priest and members of the Sanhedrin could vouch



Lesson XXX continued

for his actions. He had received letters of authority to arrest and bring back to Jerusalem for punishment, believers of the way in Damascus. This shows him as a true and strict adherent to the Mosaic Law as a Pharisee.

Verses 6-13.

On the way to Damascus, coming near the city about noon, there was a sudden great light shining down around Paul from heaven. He proceeds to describe the entire experience in detail (as previously in chapter 9).

Verse 14.

Paul arrived in Damascus blind. A man, a devout Jew, native of that city, came to see him. He called him Brother Saul, and said receive thy sight. He also calls him chosen of the God of their fathers – that he should know God's will. He was to see the Just One – Jesus Christ – the opposite of what the Jews had accused and condemned Him of being. This was also the confirmation of what Paul had experienced – having seen and heard Jews.

Verse 15.

God has called him to be a witness to all men – Jews and Gentiles.

Verse 16.

Ananias then suggests that no time should be wasted. Next Paul must be baptized – openly and publicly before the local believers proclaiming his faith in the salvation and forgiveness in the name of the Lord, being baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He also mentions that the rite of baptism represents the washing away of sin through accepting Christ's sacrifice in our stead.

Verses 17,18.

Paul now jumps ahead, about three years later, about his first trip to Jerusalem, after his conversion (also mentioned in Galatians 1:18). He was in the Temple praying. He was then in a trance – he had a vision – Jesus spoke to him, directing him to leave Jerusalem quickly because the Jews will not accept his testimony about Him. This event is recorded only here.

Verse 19.

Paul recounts his history among these Jews as a persecutor of those early believers (imprisoned and beat in every synagogue). It was he that made it dangerous to profess to be a Christian at that time.

Verse 20.

And specifically at the martyrdom of Stephen, he had been there, consenting to his death, even holding the coats of those that threw the stones. He says all this as reasons why it would be impossible for Jerusalem Christians to accept him. From his history as persecutor, how could they believe he had changed, but would suspect

Lesson XXX continued

he was infiltrating their group to cause their downfall.

Verse 21.

Jesus replies "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." He was to establish many churches in the world outside of Israel, and he taught, set straight, encouraged, and established them in conversion, growth, maturity, doctrine, and righteous living. More than any of the original apostles, Paul did this through his letters and built the frame of the Church upon the foundation of Christ our Lord.

Verse 22.

The crowd had listened to his story but from their point of view this only showed that yes he had gone to the Gentiles, sent by God. But what they understood this to mean, was that God had rejected them, now choosing these pagan foreigners as His peculiar people in their place. This could not be tolerated.

Again the term, "away with such a fellow" - he who tried to draw people away to a strange worship must be put to death by stoning (The Law of Moses - Deuteronomy 13:15). The crowd cried out that he should be killed.

Verse 23.

While they yelled these things, they grabbed at their upper garments to show their extreme agitation, possibly even casting them off as if preparing to begin stoning Paul right away. They also threw dust in the air. This was a sign of hostility, defiance, malice, and frustration that they could not get to Paul or strike at him.

Verse 24.

Having allowed Paul to speak - now seeing and hearing the crowd's reaction, the captain knew that Paul's speech had only increased the uproar. He, not understanding Hebrew, knew no more about what the great crime that Paul had done was. The only way to find out was to continue his previous plan - take Paul into the castle for questioning - at this point by binding him and application of the lash. Certainly, then Paul would confess his crime.

Verse 25.

While the soldiers were binding Paul with leather straps - Paul asked the centurion looking on - is it lawful for a Roman citizen to be scourged without being condemned. This was against Roman law. This stopped everything.

Next, Paul's New Course.

Lesson XXXI

The Acts of the Apostles 22:26-30. Paul's New Course.

26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest; for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free-born.

29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

30 ¶ On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.

Verse 26.

On hearing Paul's question about Roman law concerning Roman citizens, the centurion immediately went and informed the tribune that "this man" says he is a Roman.

Verse 27.

The tribune came and asked Paul directly if he was a Roman. Yes, answers Paul.

Verse 28.

The tribune admits that he had purchased that right "with a great sum". Paul states that he had that right by being born into Roman citizenship. This again relates to the grant from Julius Caesar to the citizens of Tarsus that all natives of that city were given Roman citizenship. To be free born meant the same thing.

Verse 29.

The soldiers that had been involved in scourging and questioning Paul slipped away. The tribune also was afraid, having ordered Paul bound before he was even charged. This was also against the law to treat a Roman.

Verse 30.

The next day, having loosed Paul from his bonds, the tribune calls for the chief priests and the Sanhedrin to appear before him and lay out the case of what crime or crimes they were accusing Paul of - to state the case and give the evidence, hear witnesses, to examine the matter thoroughly. Certainly he suspected it had something to do with the Jewish religion. Also Paul would have stayed with a soldier escort, kept away from the Jews. This apparently had to take place back outside of the castle in a place large enough for this size gathering (80 to 100 people).

Lesson XXXI continued

Acts 23:1-30.

1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

2 And the high priest Anani'as commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

6 ¶ But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.

11 ¶ And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.

12 ¶ And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you tomorrow, as though ye would inquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.

16 ¶ And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?

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20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul tomorrow into the council, as though they would inquire somewhat of him more perfectly.  
21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.  
22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast showed these things to me.  
23 ¶ And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesare'a, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night;  
24 and provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor.  
25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:  
26 ¶ Claudius Lys'i-as unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting.  
27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman.  
28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council:  
29 whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds.  
30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell.

## Verse 1.

Looking at the gathering, Paul seriously was intent on assuring these highest Jewish priests and elders of his conscience. There was nothing that he had ever said or done against God right up to the present moment.

## Verse 2.

There was an immediate response from the high priest himself - revealing a quick temper. Annas yells at the soldiers standing by Paul to hit him on the mouth. He considered Paul's words as blasphemy against God because he had been propagating the "false doctrine" of Jesus.

## Verse 3.

Paul replied just as quickly, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall". This saying describes a hypocrite - pretending to be a righteous judge - but passing judgment without hearing or weighing the defense of the accused person. The accused was supposed to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. And the punishment must match the crime, according to the law. He was obviously not acting as a true judge.

## Verse 4.

Some standing nearby questioned Paul. Didn't he know that he was criticizing the high priest?

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## Verse 5.

Paul admits that he didn't know, calling those that told him, "brethren". Paul had not been in Jerusalem for some time. The high priesthood was frequently bought and sold. The Romans would put down one and raise up another as political pressures changed.

Paul recognizes his mistake - he should show respect to the ruler of God's people for the sake of his position, under God's providence. Paul, though, does not admit that what he said was wrong, nor did he apologize or take back his words. He said "Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

## Verse 6.

Paul noticed the presence of many of the two major politico-religious groups among the crowd: the Pharisees and Sadducees. He knew the differing doctrines of each group. Paul takes advantage of this. He calls out, "men and brethren", again to get everyone's attention and proceeds to identify himself as a Pharisee, and son of a Pharisee. Then he states the main belief that the Pharisees hold that the Sadducees don't: "the hope and resurrection of the dead". He claims that this was the cause of those who spoke accusingly against him. What Paul stated here was true because he had preached about the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the greatest proof of this doctrine being true.

## Verse 7.

As Paul already knew, the crowd's reaction was immediate - two groups started arguing against each other. The Pharisees took Paul's side as believing in the resurrection. The Sadducees were considered by them as being irreligious men.

## Verse 8.

The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, angels, or spirits. They observed the ordinances of the Law, but only for temporal benefits, happiness in their present life. They were the high priestly group and had great wealth and owned much land. The Pharisees believed in both.

## Verse 9.

Now the scribes, who also were Pharisees, got to their feet and in direct opposition to the Sadducees. They were willing to accept Paul's testimony that an angel or spirit had spoken to him - therefore he was not evil, and also God must be in it. If God be in it there should be no argument.

## Verse 10.

So the two groups were at odds with each other. The tribune again feared that between them, Paul would be torn apart. To prevent this he again sent his soldiers to rescue him and bring him back inside the castle. He is kept there overnight.

## Verse 11.

To give Paul reassurance, the Lord appeared to him that night. He told him to cheer up. As he had witnessed to those in

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Jerusalem, it was God's plan that he would also bear witness in Rome. The city was the greatest city of the Roman Empire – the center of power and government, as well as the largest population. Now he knew that God was with him in all the trials and tribulation he had gone through, and had a continuing purpose for his ministry among the Gentiles.

Verses 12,13.

The following day a group of more than 40 zealous Jews – assassins – conspired together, and swore an oath to not eat or drink until they killed Paul. It was common to dispense with the vow if unsuccessful.

Verse 14.

This fierce group went to the chief priests and elders for their help in giving them the opportunity to get close to Paul. They explain their vow and plan.

Verse 15.

They ask them to request the tribune bring Paul to them so they can further question him to clear things up. When he is near enough they will take him out.

Verse 16.

Apparently, this plot was too widely known. Paul's sister's son heard about these assassins that were planning to ambush and kill Paul. He went to the castle and was allowed to come in and speak to Paul, telling him the plan.

Verse 17.

Paul called one of the centurions to take this young man to the tribune to tell him this particular plot.

Verse 18.

The soldier did as Paul requested. Paul must have recognized God's providence and his own part in it. It was not by chance that this young man learned this. Paul played his part.

Verse 19.

The tribune took him aside where they would not be overheard and asked to hear the message.

Verse 20.

The young man repeated the Jews' plan to get Paul to the council for questioning.

Verse 22.

The tribune let the young man go, telling him not to tell anyone else that he had told the tribune.

Verse 23.

He called 2 centurions and ordered them to get 200 soldiers to go to Caesarea, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen. This was to take

Lesson XXXI continued

place about 9pm so as not to be seen – to get out of Jerusalem without these vicious Jews catching on.

Verse 24.

Horses were also to be provided for Paul and those that were to closely guard him. They were to take Paul safely to the present governor, Felix. At one time, he had been a slave, but was freed by Claudius the Roman Emperor. His brother, named Pallas, was a favorite of the emperor. Felix was married 3 times. Drusilla was his present wife. He was known as less than righteous, base, mercenary, petty, and selfish.

Verse 25.

The tribune wrote a letter to the governor.

Verse 26.

He identifies himself as Claudius Lysias – addresses it to "the most excellent governor Felix". Then straight to the heart of the matter.

Verse 27.

"This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman."

This was the common manner of letter writing during that time.

Verse 28.

He had tried to find out what they were accusing him of, finally bringing him to appear before the council.

Verse 29.

All he could understand was that it concerned questions about Jewish law. There was nothing against him that was worthy of death or being locked up by Roman authority.

Verse 30.

He had found out that the Jews had a plant to ambush and kill him. He had decided to send him to the governor. He also told the Jewish accusers to appear before the governor and explain their accusations. He considers Felix the proper authority to hear this case and make a decision. Then farewell.

Next, Paul before Felix.



Lesson XXXII

The Acts of the Apostles 23:31-35. Paul Is Taken to Felix.

31 ¶ Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antip'atris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle:

33 who, when they came to Caesare'a, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.

34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cili'cia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's judgment hall.

Verse 31.

Having been sent by tribune Lysias with a letter explaining the situation, Paul is taken that night to Antipatris.

Verse 32.

The following day, the horsemen continue on with Paul, the foot soldiers go back to the castle Antonia in Jerusalem.

Antipatris was a town rebuilt by Herod the Great, renamed after his father Antipater. It was on the road from Jerusalem. To Caesarea (about 70 miles). The distance from Jerusalem made it sufficiently safe for Paul to continue with the 70 horsemen.

Verse 33.

The soldiers on horseback arrived at Caesarea; they delivered the letter from the tribune and the person of Paul also to the governor.

Verse 34.

The governor, upon reading the letter, asked Paul what province he was from. Paul told him he was from Cilicia.

Verse 35.

The governor told Paul that he would hear his case. He would listen to Paul and to his accusers when they arrived. He would hear both sides and be fair. Paul was to be kept in Herod's judgment-hall, most likely a room set aside as a holding place where a guard would keep a prisoner in. He would be kept there until his accusers arrived. This was prudent in only hearing both sides together and not separated by time or place.

Acts 24:1-27.

1 And after five days Anani'as the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertul'us, who informed the governor against Paul.

2 And when he was called forth, Tertul'us began to accuse him, saying,

¶ Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all

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thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes:

6 who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

7 But the chief captain Lys'i-as came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands,

8 commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.

9 ¶ And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

10 ¶ Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered,

Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:

15 and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men.

17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had aught against me.

20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evildoing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

22 ¶ And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lys'i-as the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter.

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

24 ¶ And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusil'la, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to

Lesson XXXII continued

come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him.

27 But after two years Por'ci-us Festus came into Felix' room: and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

Verse 1.

The chronology runs thus: on the fifth day after his arrival in Jerusalem, he was apprehended. The following day (6<sup>th</sup>) he was brought before the Sanhedrin. The next night he was taken to Antipatris. The next day (the 7<sup>th</sup>) he arrived in Caesarea. Five days later (the 12<sup>th</sup> day after his arrival in Jerusalem) the high priest and the elders come down with an orator named Tertullus to accuse Paul before the governor. This man was most likely a proselyte to Judaism, a Roman, who spoke Greek and Latin, and was well-acquainted with Roman Laws and customs. He was useful as an advocate or lawyer.

Verses 2,3.

Tertullus was called to state the case against Paul. He begins by praising Felix and his wise administration. Great quietness most likely refers to the crackdown on the many robbers that had been active all over Judea. Felix had also put down the attempted attack by the Egyptian imposter previously mentioned in 21:38 – very worthy deeds. Pure flattery – he claims that no matter what time or place the Jews talk about how grateful they are for his beneficial administration. He is called most noble Felix.

Verse 4.

Now he states that he doesn't want to waste any of the governor's time by dwelling long on recounting his great works, nor to in any way lessen his modesty. The orator claims he only wishes to say a few words, thanking him in advance for kind indulgence.

Verse 5.

The orator now begins to explain how bad a person "this man" was. He is accused of being a pest – a troublemaker. He causes disturbances, subverting people against the Jews "throughout the world". He is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes – away from the true religion.

Verse 6.

He also works against the holiness of the temple. He tried to pollute and profane it. This was a very serious charge. If it could be proved, the Jews were allowed to put anyone to death by the Romans. He now claims that the Jewish leaders would have judged Paul by Jewish law in a fair manner. But the tribune Lysias had violently taken him out of their hands. The truth was the opposite – Lysias stopped the mob from killing Paul in their rage against him. Great violence seems to suggest that Lysias, with an armed force, interfered contrary to law by his action.

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## Verse 8.

He also commanded these accusers to come before Felix and state their case against Paul. Luke then seems to summarize the calling and examining the witnesses by verse 9. The Jews agreed with the charges enumerated by the orator, saying "these things were so".

## Verse 10.

The governor then motioned to Paul that it was his time to speak. Paul begins, as did the orator, by praising his judge for his years of experience in discerning and deciding many issues concerning the Jewish nation. He therefore expects to have a fair and favorable hearing.

## Verses 11-13.

Paul's refutation begins by his stating that he had only been in Jerusalem for 12 days. This was hardly enough time for him to organize and spread some kind of uprising. He had come to worship according to the Law of Moses. He had not publicly disputed with anyone in the Temple, or in the synagogues or the city. This could be taken as a challenge to the Jews to bring forth some kind of proof against him.

## Verse 14.

The Greek word "heresy" in other places sect, had no bad connotation at this time among the Jews. It referred to groups of differing religious beliefs or opinions, such as the Pharisees or Sadducees. Those were the accepted sects, neither of these two groups would allow or accept a third group - the Nazarenes. In fact these groups had charged Jesus with plotting against the state, and being a troublemaker who threatened their power, position, and material interests.

Paul proceeds to define his beliefs. He worships the God of his fathers - no new god or gods, no new religious creeds. He believes in the Law and the Prophets, the Old Testament Scriptures as divinely inspired, authentic and with authority.

## Verse 15.

He believes the same as the Pharisees themselves do: hope toward God that there shall be a resurrection from the dead, the just, and the unjust. Nothing different.

## Verse 16.

Paul now explains how these beliefs influence the way he lives. Since he believes in God's judgments, that everyone will be judged for the deeds done in the body, he strives day and night to so live as to have a clear conscience toward God and men. Toward God he follows the traditional ways of worship according to the Scriptures. Toward men, not to do any harm, and to be aware, and comfort and serve those in need.

## Verses 17,18.

Paul now identifies his absence from Judea as "many years". His reason for returning at this time was to bring offerings and

Lesson XXXII continued

money to help those less fortunate. This relates to his lack of participation in political matters. His return had no part of disturbing the peace or hurting anyone. He brought partly the fruit of his labor as well as from foreigners – offerings to God and His Temple. This only shows his reverence to God and His Temple. This only shows his reverence for the established worship of the God of Israel.

The truth of what started the whole uproar: the group of Jews from Asia. They recognized Paul in the Temple. He had just gone through a purification vow to God. He had no group of people with him, with which to start something. He also did not do anything to get people to pay any special attention to him.

Verse 19.

It was this group of Asian Jews that should be before Felix now to voice their accusations. Is the reason they are not present because they actually have no proof against Paul?

Verse 20.

His next argument refers to the group of priests and elders (the council) now before Felix. Do they have any evidence of his doing anything wrong or evil before, when he was before the council in Jerusalem.

Verse 21.

Paul again brings up this one thing that he had openly admitted to – that he stated his acceptance and belief in the resurrection of the dead at that council meeting. This was the only accusation that they had against him. Since this belief was part of the nationally accepted doctrines, therefore there was nothing criminal that they could bring up now before Felix.

Verse 22.

Felix speaks explaining that he is not ready to make a judgment. He had decided it necessary to wait until he interviews Tribune Lysias. Then he will have a more perfect knowledge of that way. He will then get details about Paul's case in particular. This will prepare him to make a fair judgment.

Verse 23.

Felix ordered a centurion to take charge of Paul, but allow him to have visitors – of his own acquaintances. Those of his faith could also bring things for his convenience and comfort. They could come as often as they wanted to. He had obviously found no criminal offense, evil, or danger from Paul. There were, however, at least two reasons that he didn't just let him go: 1<sup>st</sup>, he didn't want to satisfy the Jews, who could cause him great harm if they decided to by complaining against him to Rome. 2<sup>nd</sup>, according to his reputation and history, he hoped to get paid by Paul or his friends to purchase his freedom (verse 26).

Verse 24.

After some days, Felix – with his wife Drusilla (a Jew), got

Lesson XXXII continued

Paul to give instruction in more detail about faith in Christ.

Verse 25.

He reasoned of righteousness: what was just and right between God and man, between men in all areas of life. Also about self-control, moderation in all appetites and passions. Finally, to judgment - to give account of all things done in this life. This was pointed at and adapted to the condition of the person he was speaking to. Felix was known as a tyrant, oppressive in his governing. He indulged all his fleshly appetites. Drusilla was also guilty of many deeds, selfish, unjust, and sinful. It appears she had given up her belief and practice of Moses' Law for her husband.

That Felix "trembled" gives us the hope that this shows his conscience was still able to feel guilt and regret for the wrongs he had done. He was still able to feel the pull or influence of the Spirit of God. That he repeatedly sent for Paul to speak with privately suggests that he sought further information and understanding. After "trembling" he had sent Paul away abruptly - possibly because he had become uncomfortable, and self-conscious, or confused, and wanted to be alone before anyone noticed or said anything.

Verse 26.

This states a completely different motive for his continual sending for Paul - money. Either or both motives may have been part of his reasoning.

Verse 27.

Two years after Paul's arrival at Caesarea, a new governor comes to replace Felix. Felix wishes to leave a good impression with the Jews - he leaves Paul captive. It did not succeed. The Jews carried their complaints to Rome, and Nero only pardoned the certainty of Felix's punishment because of his favor of Felix's brother - Pallas.

Next, chapter 25. Paul and Festus.

Lesson XXXIII

The Acts of the Apostles 25:1-22. Paul and Festus.

- 1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesare'a to Jerusalem.
- 2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,
- 3 and desired favor against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him.
- 4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesare'a, and that he himself would depart shortly thither.
- 5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him.
- 6 ¶ And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesare'a; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.
- 7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.
- 8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.
- 9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?
- 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.
- 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar.
- 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.
- 13 ¶ And after certain days king Agrip'pa and Bernice came unto Caesare'a to salute Festus.
- 14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:
- 15 about whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him.
- 16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.
- 17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.
- 18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:
- 19 but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.
- 20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him

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whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

22 Then Agrip'pa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. Tomorrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

Verse 1.

Porcius Festus arrives in Caesarea to take over the role of Roman governor over Judea. After three days he went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with the nature and traditions of the ecclesiastical government of the Jews. This would be necessary for him to see how he would keep the peace and order related to Roman requirements and their standards of law and justice.

Verse 2.

As if no time had passed or anything had changed, the new governor is first asked to have Paul brought back under their control. The Jews assumed that Felix had left Paul bound to please them, so Festus should also want to do this to earn their good favor. They appear to have presented a number of charges against Paul, couched in terms of law to persuade the new governor that their request was reasonable for a new trial before their council in Jerusalem.

Verse 3.

Their real motive is stated plainly, on the trip to Jerusalem a group of assassins would be waiting to ambush and kill him.

Verse 4.

For whatever reason, Festus felt no obligation, no desire to please these Jewish leaders. He simply told them that Paul would stay where he was. Whether he had been informed about the full account of what had really transpired in Jerusalem (and those that vowed to kill Paul), we are not told. Possibly that Paul was a citizen of Rome had a bearing on this matter.

Verse 5.

Apparently, Festus had planned to go to Jerusalem soon, stay there a short time (a little over 10 days), but then to return directly to Caesarea. Therefore it would not be until he returned to Caesarea that he would have the needed time to look into the case of Paul, to also have authoritative and respectable men to state the accusations against him. He could only judge a case involving true violations of the law, not wild accusations concerning religion and the Jewish Temple.

Verse 6.

The day after his return, Festus sat upon the judgment seat and called for Paul to be brought before him.

Verse 7.

Once Paul was present those who came down from Jerusalem, the



Lesson XXXIII continued

Jews were allowed to speak. It appears that their malicious intentions led them to make up some new charges, more than just those only concerning the Jewish law. Unfortunately for their intentions, Roman law required proof and they could produce none. These may have included sedition and treason, "many and grievous complaints".

## Verse 8.

Paul answered for himself - he had done nothing against Jewish law, against the Temple, nor yet against Caesar.

## Verse 9.

In order to do the Jews a favor, Festus asked Paul if he was willing to go to Jerusalem and have another trial before him, and hear again the accusations of the Jews. Since Paul was a Roman citizen, he could not be forced to go.

## Verse 10.

Paul answers: "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged". Each procurator represented Caesar in the province over which he presided. This was the lawful and proper place where a Roman should be tried. Certainly Felix left a record of the trial of Paul over which he presided - including the charges and Paul's testimony. Again, before Festus, Paul reiterates that the Jews could not prove any wrongdoing on his part. Festus by this time must agree that no charges have been proven against him.

## Verse 11.

The real issue - should Festus grant the Jews this favor? It is obvious they seek his death. Paul says that he is not trying to avoid death if it could actually be proven that he is guilty of a capital crime. But he has just been tried before Festus and not found guilty of any crime under Roman law. Therefore Festus has no right to send him off for another trial back on the home grounds of these Jewish accusers. As verse 16 says, "It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die", and so on.

The final appeal - as a Roman citizen, Paul had the right in criminal cases to appeal if he thought the judge was doing anything contrary to the law. This right of appeal was taken very seriously. Those in authority that were guilty of not listening and acting upon any Roman citizen's appeal to Caesar were considered violators of the public peace and condemned. Paul saw the situation this way: he was now standing before a tribunal hearing where he should be judged. If Festus refused to try his case and make a judgment, Paul refused to be sent to Jerusalem, and appealed to Caesar.

Festus consulted his advisers and the majority advised that the best course was to send Paul to Rome. Any other choice could only be controversial and only have a potentially troublesome or inflammatory outcome. The decision Festus states clearly - "Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go."

## Verse 13.

King Agrippa was the son of Herod Agrippa (mentioned in Chapter 12:1). When his father's youngest brother (named simply

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Herod) died he was given the kingdom of Chalcis by Claudius. He later was granted a larger area to rule over. Eventually he was given the power to appoint the Jewish high priest. He was very loyal to Rome and tried to keep order among the Jews; he failed and finally joined his troops with those of Titus in attacking Jerusalem. He lives several years after the destruction of the Jewish nation.

Bernice was this man's sister, and also sister of Drusilla mentioned in chapter 24. She was married first to her uncle, simply Herod. At his death, she went to live with her brother, with whom she was "violently suspected to lead an incestuous life." There were later rumors of her having love intrigue with Titus the emperor.

They have come to Caesarea to salute Festus in his new position.

#### Verse 14.

After a period of time - 'many days' - Festus brought up the case of Paul, as the one left behind without decision by the previous governor. Agrippa was more familiar with the issues of this case than he was. Perhaps he could help him understand the issues more clearly.

#### Verse 15.

The matter was presented to him at Jerusalem by the chief priests and elders who wanted a sentence of death 'judgment' against him. They did not demand justice, but condemnation and a sentence of death.

#### Verse 16.

Festus elaborates on the case. He begins by reviewing Roman law. To gratuitously give a man over by favor or caprice, to any group, for this man to be put to death, was not the Roman way. Roman law required the accused and the accusers to both be heard impartially, face to face.

#### Verse 17.

When the accusers had come to Caesarea, on the next day Festus held the hearing, ordering Paul to be brought before him.

#### Verse 18.

Apparently he was expecting Paul to be accused of some very serious crime. After all Paul had been taken out of the hands of the Jews by Roman soldiers. He had been brought to Caesarea two years before, tried once before the Sanhedrin, and once before the previous governor - left in jail these two years. And that the leaders of the Jewish nation were still actively united in accusing him and demanding his condemnation. The crime must be bad enough to warrant these actions against him. But upon hearing their accusations and Paul's defense, he was genuinely surprised by the nature of their charges, not being criminal according to Roman law. In addition, there was no proof.

#### Verse 19.

He describes what he heard as questions of their own superstition. To the Romans, superstition had the same meaning as it does today. Here, this must be taken as the Roman point of view

Lesson XXXIII continued

toward the Jewish religion, the national worship. Another point of contention was about Jesus. The Jewish leaders declared him dead - Paul, however, affirmed that He was alive.

Verse 20.

How was he to judge in such matters, according to the law? Where or how was it broken? Where and how had the Temple been defiled? How could it be proven whether Jesus was dead or raised to life? It seemed more proper that the Jews should deal with these matters before their council in Jerusalem. He had asked Paul if he would go back there for this purpose.

Verse 21.

At this point, Paul appealed to Caesar (Augustus). He had kept Paul up to this time, planning to send him to Rome at some future date.

Verse 22.

Apparently, Agrippa was now curious as to this strange set of circumstances. He now wanted to hear from 'the man' himself. Festus states - the following day he shall certainly hear him. The stage is set for Paul to witness to another ruler.

Next, Paul before Agrippa, who was almost persuaded.

Lesson XXXIV

The Acts of the Apostles 25:23-27. Paul before Agrippa.

23 ¶ And on the morrow, when Agrip'pa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrip'pa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him.

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrip'pa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

Agrippa's father before him had been actively working against the spread of this new faith. He was instrumental in having James put to death and would have Peter killed also, had God not intervened. His father Herod Agrippa I was king of Judea from 41-44 A.D. After his death, the government of Judea reverted to pro-curatorial administration. Though in his late teens during these years, there is no doubt that Agrippa had heard a great deal about Christianity. This would have also included what was voiced about the remarkable conversion of Paul, by this time known throughout Judea, all Asia Minor, and Greece. It was only natural that he would want to see and hear from this notorious man himself.

Verse 23.

On the morrow, Agrippa and Bernice came. Not simply, but with a great show: pomp, splendor, a great parade, a splendid retinue. Herod the Great had this great pride in this very city, leading to his being smitten by God, eaten up by worms, a horrible death, a few years before.

This was in the place of hearing in the palace of Festus. This was not another trial since Paul could now only be tried at Rome. There were no Jewish accusers. It was a grand ceremony for the royal curiosity to hear from this man concerning his religion. All the most important Romans and local citizens were also in attendance.

Verse 24.

Festus introduces the purpose of this great gathering. It was for them to see this man that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, and also in Caesarea that had made such a row trying to get Paul put to death

Verse 25.

Two facts have now resulted after hearing the case. No crime had been proven "worthy of death", and he had appealed to the Emperor

Lesson XXXIV continued

(Augustus). The only choice now open was to send him.

Verses 26,27.

But there remained one major obstacle. To justify such an action, there must be some charges and proof against him, to present to Augustus in an accompanying written document. "Wherefore" Festus is turning over the whole matter to King Agrippa as one who had special ability to hear and decide the case, pointing out a lawful and reasonable way to write up the missal to send with Paul - that would "signify the crimes laid against him."

Acts 26:1-23.

1 Then Agrip'pa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 ¶ I think myself happy, king Agrip'pa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 ¶ My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers:

7 unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrip'pa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

9 ¶ I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.

12 ¶ Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,

13 at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these

Lesson XXXIV continued

things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee,

18 to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 ¶ Whereupon, O king Agrip'pa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

20 but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me.

22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come:

23 that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

#### Verse 1.

The stage is set, all parties present. Agrippa is in charge. He begins by giving Paul permission to speak in his own defense. Paul begins with the gesture he has used before to signify that he was about to speak to gain everyone's attention. Many statues from this time show this gesture as common to leaders and orators, standing, with the arm raised.

#### Verses 2,3.

Paul begins by stating his pleasant surprise of having his case brought before one who was an intelligent and knowledgeable judge concerning the laws and customs of his country. This even though Agrippa was king of the regions north of Palestine, east of the Jordan and south of Damascus, called Trachonitis.

#### Verse 4.

Paul starts with a recounting of his early years, brought up in Jerusalem, educated there according to the traditional Jewish custom, probably from around the age of 12.

#### Verse 5.

The strictest sect in doctrine and moral practice was the Pharisees. He was known by them as a member and devoted follower of their beliefs in his maturity.

#### Verse 6.

"For the hope of the promise" referring back to the hearing before the Jewish council; the subject - the resurrection of the dead. This promise was found in many passages in the Old Testament (unto our fathers).

Lesson XXXIV continued

## Verse 7.

This was the same promise that all 12 tribes of the nation of Israel had hoped for, also witnessed in the religious services ordained by God in the Old Testament.

## Verse 8.

Assuming that Agrippa believed in the true God, and His omnipotence, it would not be unbelievable that He could raise the dead.

## Verse 9.

The other thing the Jews had against Paul was about Jesus. He refers back to the time when he thought it the right thing to persecute those who called themselves followers of Jesus the Nazarene.

## Verse 10.

Before his conversion, Paul had been given a great deal of power from the chief priests. He had the authority to have Christians arrested and imprisoned. Many were subsequently put to death. No number and no names were recorded that were ever brought to light.

## Verse 11.

Here Paul describes the extremes that he went to. He even calls himself a fierce madman. He went after them often, in every synagogue, made them renounce Christ to save their lives. He even pursued them outside of the Jewish nation, going to cities he was unfamiliar with, with zeal.

## Verse 12.

With this intention, he made up his mind to go to Damascus. He had the commission and authority from the chief priests.

## Verses 13-15.

Paul again recounts the details of his conversion as noted in detail in chapter 9.

## Verse 16.

This detail is first mentioned here. For different circumstances he apparently mentioned things that clearly spoke to that particular audience. Certainly other details were never deemed appropriate or necessary to mention at all. Jesus called upon Paul to be a minister – the Greek work including the meaning of under the authority of another, an assistant or servant. The word comes from use describing a boating term – an under-rower whose responsibility was tug hard at the oar to bring the vessel through rough seas to safe harbor.

The word witness at this time was used for those who lost their lives because they testified to the truth of the Gospel. A synonym for martyr. Church tradition tells of Paul being beheaded in Rome by the command of Nero.

Jesus reveals that Paul will have future communications from Him. These may include Paul's often rescue, as well as dreams, visions (trances), or general inspiration which enabled Paul to

Lesson XXXIV continued

reveal the secret things of God for the edification of the church. Also, the miraculous power given to do works in confirmation of God's truth and presence.

## Verse 17.

God would be with Paul though Jews and Gentiles opposed him. God here was taking Paul away from the great malice of the Jews, and sending him to the Gentiles. His purpose is the same - to proclaim the Gospel of Salvation.

## Verse 18.

He would instruct and explain the Gospel so they could understand what God had done for them. He will show them the light to bring them out of the darkness of their mythologies and superstitions. This will also free them from the power of satan, the king of the darkness of this world. The blessed Gospel of Christ frees the spirit and brings them into the kingdom of God as His child, receiving forgiveness for their sins.

As children of God they are heirs to heaven. They are also sanctified - set apart for the purification of the heart. This all comes by faith in Jesus. He died for their sins and rose again for their justification. Therefore there is no merit in any of man's efforts, whether works or suffering.

## Verse 19.

Again addressing King Agrippa directly, Paul simply states that he had to obey this heavenly vision. This in spite of all his previous prejudices and malicious acts against Christians and their beliefs. He had been stopped in his tracks and had been shown the truth in a miraculous way by the risen Christ, period.

## Verse 20.

His obedience was immediate. He began preaching first in Damascus, and round about in neighboring areas for about 3 years. Then he went to Jerusalem and preached around Judea. Then to Asia Minor and Greece. His message was repentance from their sins, turning to God as Judge and Savior. To show by their changed conduct that the sincerely sought salvation was from only God.

## Verses 21-23.

For these causes the Jews had grabbed him in the Temple and were going to kill him. Four causes may be summarized thus:

1. He had expressed his believe in the resurrection of the dead.
2. He had seen the resurrected Christ that they had killed.
3. Christ Jesus was the promised Messiah (the Suffering Servant).
4. He had preached salvation through Christ to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

Apparently, his not mentioning the accusations about defiling the Temple and disloyalty to the Roman government indicates that these charges were abandoned at the preceding trial before Festus.

With God's help and promise, Paul continued up to this present



Lesson XXXIV continued

time testifying before rulers, kings, priests, and peasants. In spite of opposition, threats, and deprivations, he had steadfastly followed his calling. His message was straight from the Old Testament prophets and Moses, the prophecies and promises of God.

The Jews, however, had chosen to expect the triumphant Messiah promised to bring the glory of Israel as a ruling nation and reign on the throne of David. They were aware of the prophecy of Isaiah 53 about the other Messiah who they made into a second Messiah who would suffer and be put to death. The first they called Messiah ben David, the conqueror, the second, Messiah ben Ephraim, would suffer and die. Their motives are clear. Their own benefit was their highest priority. It is the triumphant Messiah that the Jews still look for.

Paul reiterates that the prophets spoke of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ – thus the proof of the belief in the resurrection of the dead, Christ being first to rise from the dead unto eternal life. All others raised from the dead had died again.

This message was also to be delivered to those who didn't have God's revelation, the Gentiles, who sat in the shadows, in fear and ignorance. They were brought into the light through the Gospel of Christ, to know the truth through Christ. They that believed would be part of the glorious Church. Isaiah 49:6 - "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth."

Next, Festus stops Paul, and he replies, directing his words, first to Festus, then to Agrippa.

Lesson XXXV

The Acts of the Apostles 26:24-32.  
Paul Concludes, Agrippa Responds.

24 ¶ And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.  
25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.  
26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.  
27 King Agrip'pa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.  
28 Then Agrip'pa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.  
29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.  
30 ¶ And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:  
31 and when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds.  
32 Then said Agrip'pa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

Verse 24.

Obviously Paul had been speaking of things of a spiritual nature, things Paul had experienced, of Scripture, prophets, Moses, resurrection, and so forth. All these were completely foreign and fantastic to a Roman military man, a heathen. He could only describe Paul's words as those of a man "beside himself", a madman. He suggests that Paul had acquired so great an amount and variety of knowledge that his brain was overloaded, therefore he was not making sense.

Verse 25.

Paul's reply shows no anger or resentment toward what Festus just called him. He addresses him as "most noble Festus", a respectful way to address the governor. Paul merely states, "I am not mad, ... but speak forth the words of truth and soberness."

Verse 26.

Paul continues his apology to Festus by mentioning that he was speaking freely before Agrippa, who being raised as a Jew, would be familiar with the law and the prophets. He would easily follow and understand these religious subjects that he had been speaking about. "...none of these things are hidden from him..."

"...for this thing was not done in a corner" refers to the preaching, miracles, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They were public, widely voiced about for some time. Agrippa must be well aware of these recent events.

Verse 27.

Directly addressing the King, Paul asks him if he believes

Lesson XXXV continued

the prophets, and immediately answers for him, "I know that thou believest." The next logical step for a believer in the prophets is to accept Paul's discourse concerning those prophecies that spoke of Christ, the Suffering Servant, triumphing over death, the living proof of the fulfillment of those prophecies. As if Paul is saying that since Agrippa believes the prophets, he must also believe their prophecies, and therefore he must believe in their obvious fulfillment as Paul has made personal and plain. Paul's reasoning was impeccable.

## Verse 28.

Agrippa's reply: "Almost." "Although if Paul was correct in his assumption of the king's beliefs, the king could acknowledge the truth of Paul's evidence, and accept the truth of this new Christian faith as valid, but whether he could accept it personally as his own was still his choice. He must recognize its new existence. He chose not to accept Christ as his savior. It appears his position of importance and secular life were more important than any religious beliefs. He was totally invested in the status quo.

## Verse 29.

Paul's response expresses his deepest desire. He wishes that not only the king but also each and every one in the audience were not only almost but altogether persuaded as he himself was. His best wishes for all of them were that they might be blessed with the joy of his faith. And we can imagine him raising his chains, saying, "except these bonds."

## Verse 30.

This dramatic and emotional gesture made an immediate and powerful impression on the audience. They could bear no more. The king and the governor, Bernice and the other dignitaries sitting with them stood up, signaling the end of this interview. They turn aside and confer privately. Their unanimous consensus is that Paul had done nothing worthy of death, much less, even "these bonds." This was obviously an innocent, eminent, and dignified person. Why should he be in this unjustified condition? In no way a criminal yet bound.

## Verse 32.

Agrippa expresses the strong emotion he has just experienced in this conclusion - he speaks directly to Festus. This man should be freed, he is not guilty of breaking any law. But there remained one obstruction - he had appealed unto Caesar. This appeal had been properly recorded and the process begun. It had to be carried out.

It has been suggested that Agrippa, on his return to Rome, spoke favorably to the emperor concerning Paul's case - that Paul was allowed certain liberties. He lived for 2 years in a rented place, where guests could come and go freely. This worked together for the good of spreading the Gospel in the seat of the government of the vast and powerful Roman Empire.

Paul's calling and conversion was strong proof of the truth of Christ's Gospel. His mission to the Gentiles was also extraordinary and its implication to further the spread of the Gospel

Lesson XXXV continued

to all nations. In every way it was also a supernatural work of grace, only possible by the mercy and power of God.

The Gentile world is described as in darkness – having no real awareness or correct understanding of spiritual or eternal things. This includes any knowledge of the one True God. They remained under the dominion and authority of the god of this world, living for the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. They lived in sin with no awareness of their guilt, their impure and unholy hearts.

The Gospel of God's grace changes everything. Their eyes are opened to see the truth, from darkness into the light. This allows them to perceive their own bondage and slavery to sin, and then to accept the beauty and grace of salvation by grace, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus. This brings a change only possible by the Spirit of the Lord. Their sins are forgiven. They begin on the journey of purification of heart, to love and serve the risen Christ, to experience the joy of children of God. Not birth or much education, not by insight or cleverness, power or position can this be possible. It is and forever will be the work of God alone, by faith in His Son. This was Paul's message. It has come down to us, also Gentiles. It is also the message needing to be proclaimed in our present world of darkness and materialism, self seeking and sin.

Acts 27:1-11. Paul's Journey to Rome begins.

1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyt'ti-um, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristar'chus, a Macedo'nian of Thessaloni'ca, being with us.

3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cili'cia and Pamphyl'i-a, we came to Myra, a city of Ly'ci-a.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmo'ne;

8 and, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called the Fair Havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lase'a.

9 ¶ Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, 10 and said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

Lesson XXXV continued

## Verse 1.

The decision was made. The orders delivered. Paul was to be taken to Rome, according to his appeal. Other prisoners were included. The "we" here indicates that Luke was also present, and therefore could give such a detailed account of the journey. They are turned over to a centurion of Augustus' band.

## Verse 2.

A ship is found and boarded for the first leg of the trip. It is identified as from the home port of Adramyttium, most likely on the coast of the Aegean Sea, not far from Pergamos. Another individual that had been with Paul at Ephesus (chapter 19:29) is mentioned as now also traveling with him, named Aristarchus.

## Verse 3.

The following day they stopped briefly at Sideon. Julius obviously had been given direction to treat Paul kindly by Agrippa and Festus. Julius allowed Paul to go ashore to visit the Christians there. Most likely he was accompanied by one soldier, no other precautions to prevent Paul's escape.

## Verse 4.

Sailing north, under Cyprus (the next leg), because of contrary winds.

## Verse 5.

Then sailing near Asia Minor, Cilicia and Pamphylia, they came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

## Verse 6.

There the centurion found a ship bound for Rome. It was carrying wheat from Egyptian Alexandria, also articles of Persian and Indian merchandise. The prisoners and companions were boarded therein.

## Verse 7.

They sailed slowly many days. The winds were not in their favor, and the vessel was heavy laden. They came near Cnidus, under Crete, near Salmone, a promontory on the eastern coast of Crete.

## Verse 8.

From there they arrived at the port called The Fair Havens. It is still there today with the same name. It is near the northern extreme of the Island. There was a city named Lysea.

## Verse 9.

They remained there several days. The time passed the Jewish day of atonement always celebrated on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month – to us it would be the later days of September. This was known as proverbially dangerous among the ancient Jews, to be sailing on the Mediterranean Sea. Whether from his own experience or general knowledge, or from the Holy Spirit, Paul prudently felt it necessary to warn them.

Lesson XXXV continued

Verse 10.

The cargo, the ship itself, and all the passengers would face great hurt and damage. Many lives would be lost.

Verse 11.

The centurion did not believe Paul, but listened to the captain of the ship, and its owner. So they continued their journey.

Next, the Ill-Fated Voyage.

Lesson XXXVI

The Acts of the Apostles 27:12-44. The Ill-fated Voyage.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phoenix, and there to winter; which is a haven of Crete, and lieth toward the southwest and northwest.

13 ¶ And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete.

14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroc'lydon.

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive.

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

17 which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, struck sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship;

19 and the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 ¶ But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.

27 ¶ But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in A'dria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;

28 and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.

29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.

30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under color as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.

32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.

33 ¶ And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing.

Lesson XXXVI continued

34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat; for this is for your health: for there shall not a hair fall from the head of any of you.  
35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat.  
36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.  
37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls.  
38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.  
39 ¶ And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.  
40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoisted up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.  
41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.  
42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.  
43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:  
44 and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.

## Verse 12.

Where they were presently, Fair Havens, was not a good place to pass through the winter. The unanimous opinion of those on board, also following the advice of captain and ship owner, was to leave there, and get to a better winter haven of Crete. It was named Phoenix and further to the west. There a wind blows from the southwest toward the Aegean Sea. Also one blows from the northwest.

## Verse 13.

They next experienced a softly blowing south wind. They surmised that this would enable them to carefully make their way, keeping close to the coast of Crete and get safely to the next port. They set off.

## Verse 14.

not long after they began, a tempestuous wind arose. They even had a special name for this wind – Euroclydon. This described a wind that blew in all directions, unpredictably and violently.

## Verse 15.

The ship was no longer controllable by rudder or sail. They couldn't turn the prow to face the wind. Their only option was to let go of all controls, and let these winds drive the ship wherever they would.

## Verse 16.

The ship "came under" an island named Claudia. It was located



Lesson XXXVI continued

at the southwestern end of Crete. The boats that were commonly carried aboard ships must have been washed overboard, or it was being towed off the stern of the ship, they had a hard time trying to save it from being broken to pieces.

## Verse 17.

Once the boat was secure on deck, they set to work frapping the ship. This means passing strong cable under the vessel at the front (prow), carry it along until it was under the keel, then joining the two ends on deck. This would prevent the planks from being forced outward. This could be repeated as much as deemed necessary to prevent any break up or "opening".

By this time they didn't know where they were - not seeing sun or stars for many days. They didn't even know what direction they were going in. This led to a general fear of running into a hazard - one major fear was being driven onto some shoals or quicksand. "Strake sail" suggests they brought down anything left of sails on the main mast to lessen the effect of the winds on the ship.

## Verse 18.

The tempest was violently tossing the ship. The next day they lightened the ship - most likely throwing overboard anything not part of the ship on the deck.

## Verse 19.

The third day they tossed even the cables, anchor, non-essential parts of the ship's tackling.

## Verse 20.

At this point, they had been in this tempest for several days, and had no way to judge where they now were. The storm was not letting up and they felt it inevitable that they would be driven until the ship would be destroyed and their lives forfeit. Hope was gone.

## Verse 21.

Most likely the long abstinence of Paul here described refers to his not speaking out this whole time. At this extremity he steps forth in their midst and admonishes them for not heeding his previous warning. They should not have left Crete and they would not be in the present danger of harm to the vessel and loss of their cargo.

## Verse 22.

He adds one item of good news - everything will be destroyed, but no one was going to die. All would come through this alive.

## Verse 23.

Divine intervention - the God who Paul serves gave him this message. The circumstances in which the message was given were all contrary to what Paul was boldly and confidently to say. Obviously he believed what he said, and the fact that the fulfillment was exactly as the prediction, was strong evidence to these heathens that the God Paul served was far different from their own.

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Verses 24,25.

The angel assured Paul that God's plan was for him to be delivered to Rome to be brought before Caesar. So essential was this man to God, that God granted the saving of all aboard as part of Paul's rescue. 276 lives would be saved for his sake. Another great witness to the power and mercy and faithfulness of God. This also gave strong evidence that though a prisoner, Paul was no criminal but a prophet of the true God.

Verse 26.

The last detail from the angel was that they would be cast upon an island. Later we learn that this island was named Melita.

Verse 27.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> night, about midnight, the experienced sailors sensed nearness to land.

Verse 28.

They heaved a line with lead at the bottom to measure the depth - 20 fathoms, about 120 feet. A little farther on, sounded again - about 105 feet.

Verse 29.

They realized they could be getting very near a coastline, and fearing rocks that would destroy everything. To prevent the ship from going any further in that direction, since it was getting shallower, they dropped anchors from the back of the ship.

Verse 30.

The sailors obviously thought the ship was doomed. They decided to escape by getting away in the dingy. They pretended they were going to take anchors to the front of the ship to help secure it. They lowered the boat. They were ready to abandon the passengers and the prisoners to their fate.

Verse 31.

At this point, Paul saw through the sailors' ruse. He told the centurion and soldiers that it was necessary that these sailors remain on the ship for God's providence to be realized. Only then will everyone's lives be saved.

Verse 32.

Paul was believed. The soldiers cut the boat loose, and it fell off into the surging waters.

Verse 33.

At dawn, Paul insisted that everyone must eat something. During the storm no one had eaten anything - through fear and discomfort.

Verse 34.

He entreats them to eat something for their own good, to strengthen their bodies, to improve their health. He then quotes a proverb. Not a hair shall fall from the head of anyone. He was saying

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that if they follow his advice, no one will even be hurt, much less lose their lives.

Verse 35.

While he still had their attention, he took bread and gave thanks to God for the food, their present situation, and for the promise. He broke off a piece and began to eat.

Verse 36.

Everyone was greatly cheered up, and they also had something to eat, so encouraged by Paul.

Verse 37.

There was a total of 276 "souls" on board.

Verse 38.

When finished eating, they lightened the ship, even throwing out their main cargo of wheat. By doing this the ship would be higher in the water, thus allowing them to get closer to shore before hitting bottom.

Verse 39.

Once day came, they could see land, but no one recognized it. They saw where a creek ran into the sea, creating a small bay. This looked like a possibly safe place to direct the ship into.

Verse 40.

They undid all their former measures - taking up all anchors, putting the rudders back down into the water, hoisting the sail. The Greek word translated mainsail, is more accurately the jib, or triangular sail at the front of the ship. They steered the ship toward shore.

Verse 41.

Where the fresh water met with the sea, they ran aground, not realizing how shallow it was. The front part of the ship was stuck fast, immovable in the sand bar. This left the back part of the ship at the mercy of the violence of the sea waves, which tore it apart and broke it in pieces.

Verse 42.

Now seeing the possibility of getting to shore safely, the soldiers showed their own bloodthirsty fear that some prisoners might escape them, and they would be held accountable. Their solution was to kill them all.

Verse 43.

Thankfully the centurion had authority over them. He wanted to save Paul, and acknowledgment of Paul's innocence, and extraordinary spiritual quality. He not only stopped this plot, but loosed all the prisoners and told all who could swim to jump into the water and go for land. Also, the soldiers were to do the same. It is most likely that they all made it, since part of their military training included

Lesson XXXVI continued

learning to swim.

Verse 44.

Those that couldn't swim were to grab anything that was floating – boards, planks, other ship parts, and go for the shore. Certainly, by the providence of God, everyone made it safely to shore. Paul was to go to Rome. Each peril brought him before another audience to share his faith and show the care and power of God and the truth of Christ and His Salvation.

Next, on the Island of Melita (modern Malta).

Lesson XXXVII

The Acts of the Apostles 28:1-22. On the Island of Malta.

1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Meli'ta.

2 And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.

5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.

6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.

7 ¶ In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Pub'li-us; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Pub'li-us lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10 who also honored us with many honors; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.

11 ¶ And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days.

13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhe'gi-um: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Pute'oli:

14 where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Ap'pi-i Forum, and the Three Taverns; whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

17 ¶ And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans:

18 who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; Acts 25.11 not that I had aught to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

Lesson XXXVII continued

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

Verse 1.

Once on land, the island of Melita (now called Malta) was recognized. It is between Sicily and Africa, about 50 miles from Sicily's coast. It is about 20 miles long, and 12 miles wide. It produces cotton, fruit and fine honey. The name Melita comes from the Greek word signifying honey.

Verse 2.

The people of the island are described as barbarous. The people who first settled there were Phoenician, then Carthaginians. Their ancient language was still in use, though with some Greek and Latin words and phrases. It was customary at this time to call those who spoke an unknown language "barbarians". The original of this word was not at that time derogatory - its use meant only an unknown language.

The description of the weather suggests sometime in October. The survivors were certainly totally soaked to the skin and very cold. The inhabitants of this island showed great kindness to these strangers, welcoming every person, and starting a fire even in the rain.

Verses 3-5.

Paul, volunteering to help, gathered a bundle of sticks and placed them on the fire. Obviously, a snake had been sheltering among the branches in the cold, but when placed on the fire the viper sought escape from the fire and latched onto Paul's hand. Whether it bit into his flesh and delivered its poison is not clearly stated. It may have been merely fastened enough on Paul to escape the fire, not attacking him.

The natives of the island, however, supposed that it had, seeing it hanging from his hand. These heathens had the belief that Paul must be an evil criminal that a supernatural force (some god or goddess) was instilling punishment against him. Since he had not been killed in the shipwreck, now another means was being used. This was most likely a goddess named Justice, that if a guilty one escaped the law, she would urge the punishment their sins demand.

Contrary to their expectation, Paul shook of the snake into the fire, and was not injured at all.

Verse 6.

The natives watch carefully, fully expecting Paul to show the effects of the snake's venom - there should be strong inflammation and swelling, to increase until death occurred. After a length of time they finally realized that he was not even injured. They concluded that he must not even be a normal human being, but a god. The most likely choice would have been Hercules, known as the dispeller of evil. Hercules was also famous for having destroyed two serpents that attacked him in his cradle when very young.

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## Verse 7.

The chief man of the island, the ancient title for the governor. An inscription found in Malta identified the Roman governor of the island as CHIEF of the Melitese. This man welcomed the visitors "courteously" and provided the lodging and necessities for 3 days.

## Verse 8.

During that time, Publius' father was suffering from a fever and "a bloody flux", most likely dysentery. There was no cure. Paul went in and prayed, laid hands on him, and healed him. Nothing less than a miracle from God could bring about such a restoration immediately. Even the heathens must acknowledge this reality.

## Verse 9.

Once this was known, others in the island that had illnesses or diseases came to Paul and were healed also.

## Verse 10.

The grateful people lavished gifts upon Paul and his companions, which would also include gifts of money. When they were about to leave, the locals also provided such things that they would need on their next journey aboard ship.

## Verse 11.

Three months later, the end of January or beginning of February, the wind was then generally steadier, the passage safer. A ship from Alexandria that had passed the winter at the island was to continue its journey to Italy. It was named Castor and Pollux. These were half gods, sons of Jupiter and a human. They were translated to the heavens, making the constellation called Gemini, or The Twins. This sign was good luck to mariners. It was customary to have carved images on the prow, sometimes also the stern. This custom was continued even up through colonial times by the British.

## Verse 12.

Keeping close to the eastern coast of Sicily. The capital of which was Syracuse. It is renowned as the birthplace of Archimedes, scientist and engineer. The ship stopped there for 3 days. Some form of Christianity has existed there ever since Paul's 3 day visit.

## Verse 13.

From there they 'fetched a compass' - more closely from the Greek should be 'weighed anchor' and came to Rhegium in Italy, opposite of Sicily. After one day they caught the south wind, advancing up the eastern coast of Italy to the bay of Naples. It was a main port for Alexandrian wheat-bearing ships.

## Verse 14.

There were Christians there. Indicated by Paul's letter to the Romans (written about 3 years before this voyage), many in Italy had been converted. Seven days were spent in Puteoli. Now they proceeded on land toward Rome.

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## Verse 15.

It is believed that Christianity was first planted at Rome by some of those Romans present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. They would have been devout men, proselytes of the Jewish religion (strangers of Rome Acts 2:10). no other information concerning its origin has been found. The group now traveled on the Appian Way, a stone paved road that went to Rome. Apparently the news of Paul's arrival in Italy traveled quickly, the believers came about 52 miles from Rome, catching up with Paul's group at the town of Appii Forum (or Market). The group continued toward Rome, on the same road, coming next to The Three Taverns, another town, about 33 miles from Rome. Here another group of believers had journeyed to meet Paul. He was greatly encouraged, thanking God.

Now so close to his long sought destination of the capitol of the Roman Empire, to be greeted and now accompanied by so many Christians, it must have been a great comfort. It was proof that God had brought him through all the dangers and perils, so that he would now be able to continue to spread Christ's Gospel. He would teach the existing Christians and all this in the seat of power of the Roman Empire.

## Verse 16.

Finally arriving at Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the commander of the emperor's guards. It was during the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Nero. These praetorian guards had a camp near the city. Paul was allowed to live separately, by himself and one soldier to whom he was lightly chained on one wrist. Paul mentions this in verse 20.

## Verse 17.

As was his custom, Paul had decided to make contact with the community of Jews in the area. He settled in for 3 days, and not being free to visit any synagogue, sent invitations to local leaders to come and see him. Archaeologists have found Roman inscriptions naming 7 synagogues.

## Verses 18,19.

In beginning his talk, Paul seeks to assure these leaders of the Jews that he was innocent of any transgression of Jewish laws or customs. He was possibly thinking that they had received malicious reports about him. He also had no complaints about the Jewish nation or its leaders in Jerusalem. He had been declared innocent of any criminal act deserving the death penalty. They would have released him, but because the Jews continued to speak against him, he felt forced to appeal to Caesar. He, in turn, had no accusation against them.

## Verse 20.

The central and important reason for his calling these men together was to explain his true mission. He wanted to share with them 'the hope of Israel'. That hope was of the Messiah, crucified by the Jews, but risen from the dead - the great promise believed by the Pharisees.



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## Verse 21.

They responded by saying that they had not received any communication concerning him from Judea. No one that had come to Rome from there had anything bad to say about him. Apparently, Paul was out of reach of any of their abilities to kill him, as they had so plotted in Judea. Therefore they had given up and dropped the matter as out of their hands.

## Verse 22.

It seems that certain messengers had been sent out from Jerusalem to speak against this new and wicked sect - that should be rejected and avoided. These men had heard that, 'everywhere it is spoken against'. But now in Paul's presence, they sincerely desire to hear the perspective of his knowledge and experience at some future time. This was very diplomatic, since the Christian Church in Rome may well have been around for 10 years. Paul's letter to them written 3 years before indicates a well-established and mature group of believers at Rome. A day was set.

Next, Paul's testimony to the Jewish leader at Rome.

Lesson XXXVIII

The Acts of the Apostles 28:23-31. Paul's Testimony at Rome.

23 ¶ And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.

25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the prophet unto our fathers,

26 saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive:

27 for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.

29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.

30 ¶ And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

Verse 23.

On the appointed day, many came to see Paul. He spent the whole day, morning until evening, expounding about the kingdom of God, centering on the role of Jesus. The reign of Jesus as the promised Messiah was to be of a spiritual kingdom. As the Suffering Servant, He was to reconcile man to God through His sacrifice on the cross. Paul used the evidence in the entire Old Testament, the law and the prophets, all the details of promises and prophecies that were fulfilled in the birth, preaching, miracles, healing, passion, death, and final proof – the resurrection from the dead. Had there ever been or could there ever be another person that this could be true of? Impossible!

Verse 24.

The response: some believed, and others did not.

Verse 25.

This became a great controversy among these Jews. Some accepted the fulfillment of Scripture concerning Christ. Others rejected it. Some wanted to argue about various points to disprove Paul's testimony. And so this scene has been repeated from that time to now. When hearing the Gospel, some believe and some do not. The Jews still wait and pray for the Promised Messiah, but desire the earthly kingdom – not the spiritual one. They cannot be persuaded that the only possible way to the crown was through the sacrifice on the cross. This remains the great stumbling block. At this point in

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the evening, the group was still arguing amongst themselves, and began to leave. Paul had one more thing to say before they left. This was directed at disbelievers. He quoted the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9.

Verses 26,27.

He was applying it to those who just heard the Gospel of Christ, but did not understand. Their eyes were closed. Their hearts were not reached. They were not converted or spiritually healed.

Verse 28.

The rejection of the Gospel of Christ by the great majority of the Jews had a consequence. "The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and that they will hear it." All the blessings of Christ's kingdom are included. To the Jew first, as people of "The Book", they were chosen to record the promises and prophecies concerning the Messiah. From them he would be born and raised. He would minister, then be rejected and put to death. After that, the resurrection and preaching of the apostles. God freely offered His salvation to everyone - even as Jesus had told the apostles and disciples to go to all nations. Not only was it to be offered, but the Gentiles also would hear it, which also suggests that they will listen with purpose, and accept its truth and answer its call, and believe.

Verse 29.

When Paul finished this message, the Jews left. They reasoned on the pros and cons of what must be true and authentic proof of Christ the Messiah as Savior. Those who believed would continue sharing their new-found faith. The Gospel would keep spreading wherever they went. And so it has continued, and will do so until the Times of the Gentiles ends, according to God's perfect timing when Christ calls all believers to Himself in the Rapture of His Church.

Verse 30.

Luke now summarizes Paul's following two years. He remained in his rented house. Whether an apartment as part of the prison, or nearby is not known. He was allowed to stay by himself, but still a prisoner of the state with a soldier guarding him. He was granted the freedom to have anyone that wanted to see him to do so. They would have only come to hear his Gospel message, and so he spread the truth of Christ. His being a prisoner served the purpose that God had brought him here to do. A number of those who came to him believed. As mentioned in Philemon 1:12,13 there were several people of Caesar's household in this group, so that even in the palace of Nero, Paul was talked about favorably.

Verse 31.

This summarizes Paul's preaching the kingdom of God - the true spiritual nature of the true Church, under the reign of the Messiah. "...teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

As the Lord, the sole ruler, he upholds all things by the word of His power, and governs the world and His Church. He has all things under His control, and all His enemies under His feet. He is

Lesson XXXVIII continued

the maker and sustainer of all things, and the judge of all mankind.

Jesus is the Christ, another word for Messiah, the anointed. He is the Savior who saves, delivers, and preserves for all eternity. He was appointed, set apart by God Almighty to this great and glorious work. Jesus has the Spirit without measure. He communicates the gifts and graces of that Spirit to all true believers.

Paul preached the Lord Jesus Christ. This would have included all these things plus the life and ministry of Jesus, His persecutions, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession. "With all confidence" explains Paul's complete freedom to say what he pleased and when – to all who were free to visit him. Even the unbelieving Jews had no power to prevent him from this.

It is assumed that during those 2 years, Onesimus was converted and sent back to his master Philemon, with the letter of the same name. In that epistle, Paul mentions that he had companions with him: namely, Epaphras, Marcus, Artistarchus, Demas, and Luke.

Also, during this imprisonment, the Church at Philippi sent Paul some monetary assistance by their minister Epaphroditus. On this trip he became ill from a dangerous malady, and did not return to his church until his health was restored. It is assumed that he carried with him Paul's letter to that Church. We learn two details: Timothy was present with Paul, and that there was a possibility that Paul would shortly be set free.

Here, Luke closes his account of Paul's life. It is assumed that his account was written a short time after these events took place. It is traditionally believed that Paul visited many places, and suffered much in the cause of spreading the Gospel wherever he went. That he was set free suggests that after two years in confinement, no one had come to Rome with accusations against him. He was released by imperial order. The captivity is figured as during 61-63 A.D.

According to internal evidence, four of Paul's letters were written during these two years – Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and lastly, Philippians. That is a separate study which many scholars have written in detail about.

According to all available evidence and Church traditions, Paul was free and traveled for the following 4 or 5 years – from 63 to 67 A.D. I Timothy was written at Ephesus in the same year. Paul was again arrested and imprisoned in 68 A.D. His death was recorded as in 68 A.D. In the above mentioned two pastoral epistles, his visits to various churches are mentioned. Finally, Paul was again arrested, taken to Rome and imprisoned. He was tried, convicted, and put to death by beheading.

Several early sources suggest that Paul's travels included his going west, even all the way to Spain. It has been surmised that Luke's purpose in the book of Acts was to record in broad strokes the spreading of Christianity, its beginnings in Jerusalem, and its progress all the way to Rome. Therefore he wasn't trying to write only a biography of Paul. Paul's epistles supplement the Book of Acts, continuing his relationships with the churches he founded on his missionary journeys.

### Epilogue from the Epistles

What little is known comes from details mentioned in Paul's letters written after his release. In Titus 1:5, while traveling east, he leaves Titus in Crete. In II Timothy 4:13 he stopped at Troas where he left his cloak and books with Carpus, apparently planning to come back for them.

I Timothy 1:3.

He writes, on his way to Macedonia, in 65-67 A.D., an encouraging message of love and counsel for the future. Paul also expresses grave perils that were confronting Christians - all other religions and Roman authorities were more actively against them.

Titus 3:12,13.

Still in Macedonia, planning to go to Nicopolis for the winter. Apollos is mentioned.

II Timothy 4:13-21.

Paul has had this winter in prison suffering greatly. Christianity was no longer permissible under the former shelter of a cult of Judaism. After the fire in Rome in 64 A.D., which Nero tried to blame on the Christians, they became criminals, working against the state. Informers were rewarded for turning them in.

II Timothy 1:15; 4:10,11.

Paul has been deserted by all companions, except Luke. There are some living in Rome that help him, but have to live in hiding. He asks Timothy to come, bringing Mark.

Hebrews 13:23.

Timothy did come and was put in prison also.

II Timothy 4:17.

Paul knows that he was going to die. Jesus was with him. This is the last information that Paul writes.

Church tradition finishes the story. As a Roman citizen, Paul is beheaded on the Ostian Road, outside Rome. Nero died in 68 A.D. - Paul's execution obviously had to occur before that date.

II Timothy 4:6-8 and Philemon 1:23 suffice as Paul's last words: He was prepared to go to Jesus, as he had long wished to do.

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# A Layman's Commentary On The Acts of the Apostles

**Composed In 38 Lessons**

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T.O.D. taught from The Acts of the Apostles at Paran Baptist Church on Highway 341 / Johnsonville Hwy in Lake City, South Carolina. This commentary is based on the notes he wrote in preparation for the lessons. He was an art teacher for over 30 years in Florence School District 3. He now enjoys spending his time with his wife, and at his studio on 118 Sauls St. Owen studies and teaches karate.

We would all like to thank God for His Word and His small, still voice in the lonely hours.